ABSTRACT

The Representations and Realities of Agritourism in Essex County, Ontario

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Many Canadian rural regions’ character is changing rapidly following the simultaneous distancing of commodity production-oriented agriculture from communities and the growing expectations of amenity and consumption-driven uses of rural spaces. Agritourism is one strategy used by farms seeking an alternative to corporatization and intensification that capitalizes on these expectations allowing farms to remain within the agricultural sector.

Considering this context, this research used a discourse analysis of marketing materials alongside interviews with agritourism providers and tourism organization representatives to understand and document the role of agritourism as a form of farm diversification and as a component of the place brand in Essex County, Ontario. This study highlights the differentiated uses of agritourism in the County brand in tandem with varying experiences and diversification pathways on the farm and winery. In particular, horizontal and vertical networking may play a key role in bridging the gap between brand representation and on-the-ground reality.
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List of Abbreviations

DMO Destination Marketing Organization
ECFA Essex County Federation of Agriculture
SWOTC Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation
TWEPI Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island
VQA Vintners Quality Alliance Ontario
WEEDC Windsor Essex Economic Development Corporation
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1. Scholarly Context

While change is an ongoing process within rural spaces, rural regions within the Global North have been experiencing particularly rapid and transformative economic and social change over the past several decades. These changes have largely reflected transitions in the dominant economic sectors and social makeup of rural regions. These transitions occur for a multitude of reasons but are commonly driven by changes in primary sector activity, including increasing global competition in production activities that are central to rural places’ heritage and identity. These changes often result in a diminishing dependency on primary sectors within these spaces and new uses emerge that reshape local identities. Increasingly, individual actors, community and regional organizations, and the state are taking measures to capitalize on and provide guidance to these emerging uses to build upon existing resources and activities. Relationships and networks have the capacity to help and hinder these efforts and when cultivated effectively can help leverage limited resources more productively.

In many places, rural change is intimately tied to agricultural restructuring. Since the mid-20th century, the agricultural sector has, in large part, restructured to maximize production as a result of state incentives and increasing global pressures. This is typically accomplished through: the clustering of large farm holdings, which has resulted in farms reducing in number and increasing in size; specialized production of few crops; and greater mechanization (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998). Though so-called ‘productivist’ agriculture allegedly benefits farms by increasing financial returns (Smithers & Johnson, 2004), its many critiques include a resultant growth in farmer debt due to the increased costs of staying competitive, a decline in agricultural employment due to a reduced need for skilled farm works, and greater vulnerability to market and climate fluctuations (Smithers, Joseph, & Armstrong, 2005; Woods, 2005). Small- to medium-sized farms also face additional strain as the industry pushes towards greater support for large firms and increasingly risk departure from the sector.

In response to the risk of departure from the sector as well as the many critiques of productivist agriculture, and the dissatisfaction and desire for change felt by producers themselves, many farmers are opting to diversify their enterprise as a means of remaining in the
sector. To combat a growing chasm between agricultural producers and the rural community and vulnerability to an increasingly competitive global market and a fluctuating global economy, many diversification tactics address farming at a more regional and localized scale (Renting et al., 2008). Diversification can take many forms including: organic production, specialized crop and animal production (e.g. ginseng, goats, etc.), direct marketing, and/or tourism provision (Renting et al., 2008; Inwood & Sharp, 2012). These activities build upon the existing agricultural enterprise and are used to supplement but not replace agricultural income (Inwood & Sharp, 2012). Diversified farms often reintegrate with local communities, contributing to and benefiting from ongoing rural restructuring.

Rural restructuring is, in part, a result of changes in the agricultural sector but is also driven by changes in rural actors and the rise of leisure-oriented lifestyles (Argent, Smailes, & Griffin, 2007; Woods, 2005). New rural actors are commonly exurbanites who either choose to relocate permanently to rural areas or are more transitory in nature, for example, as a tourist or seasonal resident. These new actors often seek a rural region that is the embodiment of their rural idyll in which to pursue a lifestyle that is in intentional opposition to an urban lifestyle (Woods, 2005). The multifunctional rural transition is a conceptualization of these emerging spaces that is prominent within the literature (Holmes, 2006). Holmes posits that there are three uses of rural space (production, consumption, and protection) that co-exist and together shape the physical and social landscape of rural regions (2006). In practice, this transition is often negotiated and navigated through rural development processes.

Commonly heralded as the ‘new’ rural development paradigm, neo-endogenous approaches have grown in prominence. Simply put, neo-endogenous development focuses on locally-based, community-led change to leverage and strengthen local resources for economic, socio-cultural, and/or environmental development (Krawchenko, 2016; Shucksmith, 2010). Within this approach, rural tourism is a prevalent strategy that taps into a growing need to market local physical, social, and economic amenities for successful development (Argent et al., 2007). As such, it ties into the growing multifunctionality of rural spaces by increasing consumption opportunities and fostering amenity development, while also appeasing a growing desire for ‘authentic’ rural experiences by tourists (Schnell, 2011). When rural tourism development successfully garners community support and takes a locally-rooted approach, it is able to achieve
development goals while simultaneously differentiating itself within an increasingly homogenous local and international tourism market (Cleave & Arku, 2015; Everett, 2012; Lin, Pearson, & Cai, 2011).

Culinary tourism and local food is a growing trend in rural differentiation and development (Everett, 2012; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Woods, 2005). Since “food, cuisine, and culinary traditions are among the most foundational elements of culture” (Dallen & Amos, 2013, p. 275), it is increasingly used as an ‘authentic’ site of local engagement (Schnell, 2011) and spaces of food production (e.g. the farm) and provision (e.g. the restaurant) are put forward as tourism destinations. Tourists are drawn to a food’s ability to imbue local tradition and culture, which inherently differentiates it not only from other places but also products found ‘at home’ (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Sims, 2010; Dallen & Amos, 2013). Culinary tourism and local food also cater to the goals of neo-endogenous development by fostering multi-stakeholder approaches and thriving on synergistic relationships built through effective networking (Ray, 1999; van der Ploeg et al., 2000).

Agritourism effectively ties together farm diversification and rural development strategies because it uniquely lies at the interface of productive and consumptive uses. Agritourism is defined as “the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation” (Che, 2009, p. 108). Agritourism allows farmers to capitalize on and participate in the changing rural dynamic through the provision of alternative consumption and recreation activities that are aligned with the expectations of new rural actors (Hjalager, 1996). Agritourism is also in a position to align with rural tourism, and specifically food or culinary tourism, strategies because of its dual nature as a site of food production and tourism experience. Within the literature agritourism is commonly seen through the lens of farm diversification as one of many activities that farmers use to supplement agricultural income due to an inability or unwillingness to compete within a production-driven global commodity market (Barbieri, Mahoney, & Butler, 2008; Frater, 1983). Though less common, a rural development lens is implied through several studies in terms of benefits to the community and the importance of networking (see Busby & Rendle, 2000; Schilling, Attavanich, & Jin, 2014). Additionally, analyses of the benefits sought by agritourism consumers, and the goals and services provided by
agritourism farms link directly to neo-endogenous development objectives and strategies, even if these connections are not made explicit.

1.2. Research Opportunities

Though agritourism has a long history of practice and research, there are noted opportunities within the literature for further exploration. This research seeks to address and contribute to three lines of exploration.

First, despite some noted exceptions (see, for example, Sonnino, 2004), there is an opportunity within the literature to make more explicit links between agritourism and rural development. Agricultural diversification and rural development are not mutually exclusive activities, particularly within increasingly multifunctional landscapes. As a result, Flanigan, Blackstock, and Hunter (2015) highlight the need within the agritourism literature for multiple, simultaneous approaches to best understand these interactions. The connection between place branding, promotions, and farm-level realities was identified as one such approach to understanding these interactions.

Second, this research seeks to contribute to an understanding of farmers’ motivation to diversify into agritourism. While this is a common theme within agritourism and farm diversification literature, the Canadian context remains under explored and underrepresented. Canada presents a unique context to explore agritourism because the agricultural sector continues to restructure to align with productivism and the on-farm agritourism sector is in nascent stages in many provinces (Ainley & Kline, 2014; Barbieri, 2010). This is in contrast with the majority of researched countries (e.g. United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States) where diversification into agritourism provision has a longer history and greater inclusion within governmental policy and programming at various levels (Barbieri et al., 2016; Hjalager, 1996; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). Additionally, agritourism studies within the North American context have primarily skewed towards quantitative inquiry as the dominant research method (see Barbieri et al., 2016; Nickerson, Black, & McCool, 2001). As a result, within this context there is also a need for greater exploration into the nuances and lived experience of agritourism that is best served through qualitative inquiry (Ainley & Kline, 2014).
Finally, there is a need to better understand the role of formal and informal networks in agritourism in diversification and rural development success. Networks are considered foundational within neo-endogenous rural development strategies (van der Ploeg et al., 2000) and complementary to culinary tourism objectives (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Lee, Wall, & Kovacs, 2015). Within the agritourism literature, there has been some research conducted that suggests networks are beneficial for both agritourism providers and their surrounding communities (Che et al., 2005; Flanigan et al., 2015; Veeck et al., 2016). This research seeks to further these exploration into networks between farmers as well as networks across sectors and with community and regional organizations.

1.3. Aim and Objectives

In light of these opportunities within the literature, this research set out to accomplish the following aim:

**Research Aim:** To document and understand the role of agritourism as both a feature of the regional brand and a form of farm-level diversification in Essex County, Ontario.

It achieved this aim through the completion of three guiding objectives:

**Objective One:** Understand how agritourism is used and promoted at the County level and identify and characterize key initiatives to market and support agritourism.

**Objective Two:** Understand the role of agritourism as a form of farm-level diversification by exploring how and why participating farmers and winery owners are turning to agritourism activities and their use of partnerships and networks.

**Objective Three:** Identify convergences and divergences between regional, farm, and winery level activities and objectives, and consider the role of partnerships and networks in bridging these levels in Essex County, Ontario.

1.4. Thesis Outline

The remainder of the thesis will be divided into four chapters. The first section will cover a comprehensive literature review, providing context for my research and the agritourism sector. The second section will detail my research methods, providing rationale for my choices and a
description of my samples. The third section will consist of a journal manuscript and will contain a directed literature review and methods section in addition to a discussion of my results and main findings. The thesis will conclude with a summary of my main findings, discuss their practical and scholarly contributions, and suggest future areas of research to build upon my work.
CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Agritourism, in many ways, is best described through the lenses of agricultural diversification and rural development strategies. For many farms, the initial development of agritourism is motivated by issues surrounding agricultural restructuring into production oriented agriculture. To stay viable, these farms have adopted different strategies, including agritourism. However, agritourism farms exist within a broader context which can present both opportunities and challenges for their continued existence and operation. Increasingly, rural regions are adopting neo-endogenous growth strategies that use food and agriculture to foster local identity, build upon local resources, and brand their region more broadly in efforts for tourism market differentiation. Agritourism has the capacity to contribute to these growth strategies through services provided on agritourism farms. These farms may also benefit from neo-endogenous growth strategies by building networks and partnerships with other agritourism farms, complementary sectors, and development organizations themselves. However, difficulties may arise for agritourism farm owners when the methods and challenges associated with maintaining agricultural production clash with rural development strategies and goals. These conflicts have the potential to further reduces farm owners’ capacity to run a successful enterprise and contribute to the ‘public good’.

To best approach agritourism as a field of study, it is apt to first understand the context in which many small to medium sized farms are initially adopting diversification strategies because it informs many of their base motivations and ongoing goals. As such, the literature review will begin with a discussion of agricultural restructuring and diversification. The focus then must approach rural development and tourism contexts within changing rural spaces to better understand the practical, social, and economic context within which agritourism enterprises exist. To accomplish this, the literature review will then provide an overview of rural change conceptualizations and delve into neo-endogenous development approaches, place branding, tourism, and the framing of food and agriculture therein. Finally, the framing of agritourism itself within the literature must be understood. This is accomplished by a brief characterization of the agritourism consumer, followed by a move towards agritourism seen through the two aforementioned lenses.
2.1. Agricultural Restructuring and Diversification

2.1.1. Industrial and Conventional Agriculture

In the post-WWII era, family farming within North America, Europe, and Australasia experienced a major shift towards a commodities production-focused structure, which has been termed ‘productivist’ agriculture; this is now dominant within the contemporary agricultural sector. The reasons for this shift were diverse in nature but the effect was to emphasize and maximize production on farm units. Within the literature, three foundational characteristics are associated with productivism: intensification, concentration, and specialisation (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998). Intensification is achieved through the adoption of new technology and the increased use of external inputs; this has largely resulted in greater mechanization of farm activities and a reliance on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Concentration occurs through the growth of average farm size and the accumulation of land for individual farms as well as the spatial aggregation of these large-scale agricultural activities. Specialisation occurs through a reduction in crop variety to capitalize on specialized knowledge and skills, and to maximize production efficiency (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998). However, this shift has not been without its consequences. Intensification does not necessarily result in economic benefits due to the high cost of continual technological updates and low commodity prices and has been detrimental for rural employment as mechanization has decreased the need for manual labour (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998). The concentration of agricultural holdings into larger and often more industrialized farms that distance themselves from rural communities has exacerbated this decrease in employment (Smithers, Johnson, & Joseph, 2004). Specialisation has exposed farmers to greater environmental and economic risk, particularly in light of a changing climate and fluctuating global market (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998; Smithers & Johnson, 2004).

Ongoing changes in agricultural policy over the past several decades have amplified the consequences of productivism. Throughout the 1970’s and 80’s, Canadian productivist agricultural was incentivized and supported through national and provincial regulatory policies and programs designed to alleviate financial pressures on farmers and reduce economic risk (Huff, 1997). These incentives and supports included subsidies, protective tariffs, and tax relief (Smithers & Johnson, 2004, p. 194), and primarily favoured large commodity producers with minimal positive impact on small agricultural firms (Woods, 2005; Huff, 1997). Since the mid-
1990’s, the agricultural sector has experienced a major shift away from subsidization, a diminishing role of the state in economic regulation, and broad neoliberal restructuring (Huff, 1997; Woods, 2005). The net effect has been the imposition of supranational regulatory frameworks that have rescaled power and facilitated corporate concentration within the agri-food sector (Woods, 2007), all effects that increase competition, decrease commodity prices, and necessitate the further industrialization of agricultural activities to achieve greater economies of scale.

Though small- to medium-sized farms may have initially taken advantage of the financial and state-led incentives to participate in productivist agriculture, the move away from short value chains and consumption-focused production has largely been detrimental to the success of these farms. As mentioned above, there is a high cost to stay competitive within conventional agriculture and it becomes more difficult to stay economically viable in light of market and environmental instability and uncertainty, greater competition from international producers, and reduced government protection due to neoliberal economic policies (Barbieri et al., 2008; Che, 2009; Lazarus, 1998; Smithers & Johnson, 2004). When viewed at the level of the farm sector as a whole, the result has been a rise in the number and dominance of large farms and a corresponding decline in the prominence and number of smaller farm enterprises (for Canadian trends see Figure 2.1). This phenomenon has been referred to as the “disappearing middle” (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996; Veeck et al., 2016). Small- and medium-sized farms are being squeezed out due to their inability to compete with large farms for specialized commodity production or the absence of an adequate conventional or alternative market for diversified commodity production (Barbieri et al., 2008; Che, 2009). However, the absence of financially debilitating investments associated with productivism (e.g. land acquisition, up-to-date technology and equipment, etc.) on many of these farms allows them the flexibility to diversify on-farm activities (Holmes, 2006; Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Sonnino, 2004). They are able to transition in part or in whole from ‘traditional’ production driven and industrialized enterprises to ‘alternative’ consumption driven and diversified enterprises (Inwood & Sharp, 2012). In a way, agricultural activities have gone full circle; productivism led away from consumption-focused activities (e.g. direct on-farm marketing and diverse production) towards a production-focus but neoliberalism has, at least for some, led the way back as many farms adapt to stay viable in this new agricultural era.
2.1.2. Adaption Strategies and Farm Diversification

Though departure from the sector is one strategy for adapting to external pressures, pluriactivity is generally the preferred route for farmers who have a strong personal connection to and family background in agriculture (Barbieri et al., 2008). Pluriactivity is an umbrella term that indicates the supplementation of agricultural income by on-farm and/or off-farm alternative income and may be engaged in due to economic or socio-cultural motives. It encompasses both off-farm employment and farm-centred diversification (Evans & Ilbery, 1993). In the past, pluriactivity was often considered a transitory activity as farmers move from one mode of agriculture to another. However, it is increasingly being recognized as a common and important activity by many farmers, including those who engage in full-time, ‘professional’ agriculture (Holmes, 2006; Renting et al., 2008). As such, pluriactivity and the activities therein should not be seen as separate from ‘conventional’ productivist agriculture because they are often complementary activities that can be used to reduce the impact of market and policy/regulatory changes on primary production, creating a more resilient enterprise (Hjalager, 1996).

Figure 2.1. Canadian trends in total number of farms and average farm area between 1931 and 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006).

2.1.2. Adaption Strategies and Farm Diversification

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Inwood and Sharpe (2012) identified two adaptation strategies farmers use to manage the pressures of the conventional agricultural sector. A ‘horizontal growth strategy’ relies on the further acquisition of land with the intent of further intensifying production. A ‘vertical growth strategy’ adds value to existing infrastructure and assets and encompasses diversification activities, thus falling under the umbrella of pluriactivity (Inwood & Sharpe, 2012). Though diversification has several variants throughout the literature, at its core it is the broadening of on-farm activities to include non-conventional products or methods, product processing, and non-agricultural products and services that are intended to supplement agricultural income (Barbieri et al., 2008; Evans & Ilbery, 1993; Evans, Morris, & Winter, 2002). Table 2.1 identifies and provides examples for the six broad categories of diversification activities that are prevalent throughout the literature and are divided into two subdivisions: deepening and broadening (Barbieri et al., 2008; Renting et al., 2008).

A deepening activity is one which is production oriented and reconfigures market and farm relations (Renting et al., 2008). There are two categories that fall within this subdivision. First, producers may introduce non-conventional products or adopt non-conventional methods. This is often with the intent to participate in a niche market that can demand price premiums for a product’s rarity or by meeting environmental or ethical certification criteria (Barbieri et al., 2008; Evans & Ilbery, 1993; Inwood & Sharp, 2012). Second, a farm may engage in new methods of marketing and distribution that differ from conventional wholesaling. This often takes the form of direct sales and is most common in near-urban areas (Barbieri et al., 2008).

A broadening activity expands the relation of the farm with the broader rural community through the provision of rural amenities, such as infrastructure, tourism, and services (Renting et al., 2008). The four remaining categories of diversification fall under this subdivision. One category encompasses the introduction of on-farm processing and value added operations, often with the purpose of extending shelf life (Barbieri et al., 2008; Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Evans & Ilbery, 1993; Ilbery et al., 2005). Another category includes on-farm recreation, tourism, and hospitality (Barbieri et al, 2008; Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Hjalager, 1996; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Evans & Ilbery, 1993). The final two categories are the least common and are respectively comprised of: the leasing or renting of farm land, infrastructure, or resources; and contracting and services offered to others (Barbieri et al., 2008).
Table 2.1. The six diversification categories divided between deepening activities and broadening activities (Barbieri et al., 2008; Renting et al., 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deepening Activities</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Non-conventional products and production methods</td>
<td>Lavender, goats, organic agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Alternative marketing and distribution</td>
<td>Community supported agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broadening Activities</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. On-farm processing and value added products</td>
<td>Jams, cheese, pickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recreation/tourism/hospitality</td>
<td>On-farm accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rental of farm land/infrastructure</td>
<td>Rental of barn space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Contracting and services offered</td>
<td>Animal training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many farms will engage in one or more activities that fall within several of the above categories. In their study of North American farmers, Barbieri et al. (2008) found that 80% of their sample engaged in diversification activities that fit within four or more of the above categorizations. Through a web-based survey that sampled over 1000 North American farms through a combination of direct emails through a mailing list and the snowball sampling technique, the study found that all respondents engaged in new marketing and distribution methods, nearly three quarters used non-conventional products or methods to capitalize on emerging markets, two thirds were involved in value-added activities, and roughly half diversified through the provision of recreation, tourism, or hospitality services (Barbieri et al., 2008). Farmers’ use of multiple diversification tactics was found in other studies (see Evans & Ilbery, 1993; Renting et al., 2008) and many farms remain engaged in conventional production methods and commodity markets in addition to these new enterprises (Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Frater, 1983; Hjalager, 1996). Alternative agricultural activities are often ‘stacked’ on a conventional agricultural base as a means of increasing income and capitalizing on emerging consumer demands while avoiding greater industrialization or expensive land purchases/high rental rates (Inwood & Sharp, 2012).
In addition to several ‘push’ factors that have led to pluriactivity, such as the growing cost of staying competitive or fluctuating commodity prices, there are also ‘pull’ factors for diversification. In many countries, regionally based state-led initiatives, policies, and financial incentives act as diversification ‘pulls’ (Ramsey, 2009; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). State assistance can help ease the transition into other agriculture sectors, tourism, or niche markets on farms that are effectively trapped into an unviable productivist mode of agriculture by large capital investments (Holmes, 2006). The lure of financial opportunities can also act as a ‘pull’ towards diversification. This driver can be particularly prevalent in areas where there is a clear niche or network for opportunists to fit in and a clear precedent has already been set to exemplify the potential financial benefits (Flanigan et al., 2015).

2.1.3. (Re)Building Local Linkages

The shift towards productivist agriculture had the result of distancing many farming enterprises from their original rural context as producers engaged with disconnected consumer bases that are mediated through corporate middle-men. Productivist agriculture is based on these vertical linkages, including those to the state, labour associations and corporate entities that mediate access to the market and distribution, and to the market itself, which is a spatially separate entity (Renting et al., 2008). As farmers diversify and broaden their activities, they rebuild horizontal linkages with local communities and other farmers, which can foster endogenous growth (Smithers, Johnson, & Joseph, 2004; Watts et al., 2005). This serves a variety of beneficial functions, including the re-establishment of trust between consumers and producers (Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000; Watts et al., 2005), a greater sense of community integration (Renting et al., 2008; Watts et al., 2005), and reconnecting with other actors in the local food sector (Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000; Renting et al., 2008; Smithers et al., 2004).

2.2. Rural Change and Development in Agrarian Landscapes

2.2.1. Conceptualizing Rural Change

Many rural spaces are changing, often in conjunction with the diminishing role of family farms and the social and economic distancing of large-scale agricultural production away from rural communities. Multifunctionality is a concept that has gained considerable traction within the literature as a method of describing both agricultural and rural change and has gone through
several iterations since the early 2000’s. Wilson (2001) first used multifunctionality to build upon and address the critiques of Ilbery & Bowler’s (1998) conceptualization of the post-productivist transition (PPT) (see Evans, Morris, & Winter, 2002; Holmes, 2006; Wilson, 2001). While the PPT suggested a wholesale transition away from productivism in regions where production-focused agriculture had been largely detrimental to agricultural enterprises (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998), multifunctionality described the co-existence and territorialisation of productivist and post-productivist modes of agriculture (Wilson, 2001). As a conceptualization of agricultural regions, multifunctionality acknowledged the simultaneous existence of diversified enterprises alongside commodity-production focused enterprises. While aspects of multifunctionality has since been applied more broadly to rural change processes (see Renting et al., 2008), the integration of multifunctionality into rural spaces has largely been attributed to Holmes (2006) and the multifunctional rural transition (MRT).

The MRT is constituted by three primary uses of rural space: production, consumption, and protection (Holmes, 2006). Production uses are equated with agricultural production, consumption uses are reflective of growing amenity-oriented uses of rural space including tourism and recreation uses, and protection uses reflect concerns regarding environmental and social protectionism, including biodiversity and indigenous rights (Holmes, 2006). Within rural spaces, these use categories have gone through various phases of integration or separation. Most recently, Holmes notes their gradual merge into a complex and variable pluralism of all three categories as a result of related major drivers of multifunctionality, including agricultural overcapacity, market-driven amenity uses, and changing societal values (2006, p. 143; Marsden, 1999). The strength of this conceptualization is that it acknowledges that rural space is used in various ways and these uses are spatially variable, thus allowing for the pluralistic use categories (Marsden, 1999). As production-focused agriculture loses its dominance in some areas, the other two uses are filling the gap, which has implications in rural dynamics and the horizontal linkages that may be established by diversifying farmers. Furthermore, it notes that even if one use is dominant in an area, it is always in co-existence, conversation, and negotiation with the other two uses and together they shape the social and physical landscape of an area.
2.2.2. Neo-Endogenous Rural Development

As rural regions become increasingly multifunctional, with the social and economic prominence of agriculture diminishing, rural development initiatives are often used to facilitate and navigate the ‘filling of the gap’ by consumption and protection uses. Whether motivated by welfare, economic, stewardship, or population control rationales (Woods, 2005), ultimately the aims of rural development initiatives are to promote “sustainable economic growth and improved living conditions, bring rural areas up to national standards of development, and ensure that rural regions are attractive places to live and able to contribute positively to the national economy” (Woods 2011, p. 131).

In recent years, rural development has largely experienced a paradigmatic shift from, and in reaction to, heavily critiqued top-down, modernization approaches (van der Ploeg et al., 2000). Woods characterizes the ‘old’ development paradigm as a state-led top-down linear progression towards greater modernization (2005). Modernization was typically sectoral in its approach and relied heavily on external investment (Shucksmith, 2010; van der Ploeg et al., 2000). For example, developing infrastructure to attract large, multinational manufacturing companies is seen as a modernization approach. As a result, the majority of economic benefits from development often left the local area (Woods, 2005). As noted within the literature, these approaches could be problematic because “their policies and programs [had] not emerged out of the very fabric of the affected region” (Johnson, Hodgett, & Royle, 2007 quoted in Krawchenko, 2016, p. 5).

So-called neo-endogenous rural development is a new paradigm that is seen as a direct response to modernization (Shucksmith, 2010; van der Ploeg et al., 2000). There are three major pillars to neo-endogenous development: public participation and a bottom-up approach to development and implementation, the use of local resources, and a territorial focus (Shucksmith, 2010; Ray, 1999; Woods, 2011). The underlying assumption is that “the well-being of a local economy... can best be animated by basing development action on the resources – physical, human and intangible that are indigenous to that locality” (Ray, 1999, p. 259). In this paradigm, the state moves from the rural development ‘provider’ to a rural development facilitator (Woods, 2005; Shucksmith, 2010) by providing funding (Woods, 2011; Krawchenko, 2016) and capacity building elements such as professional workshops or administration (Krawchenko, 2016).
Through a multi-sectoral and integrated approach, ideally, neo-endogenous development occurs across the economic, sociocultural, and environmental realms and builds community resiliency, sustainability, agency, and capacity (Krawchenko, 2016). However, some scholars argue that there is an uneven realization of these ideals in practice due to variable capacity for communities and individuals to participate and challenge fundamental barriers (Shucksmith, 2010; Woods, 2011; Ray, 1999). Additionally, there is a call for greater vertical integration in addition to horizontal integration to rectify tensions within the state-sponsored funding landscape, the translation of local action into state policies, and the resultant diminished ability to enhance capacity and empowerment (Shucksmith, 2010; Krawchenko, 2016).

2.2.3. Tourism, Place Branding, & Food

Tourism has increasingly been adopted as a rural development strategy. Though often erroneously considered a panacea for declining rural communities (Woods, 2005, p. 173), tourism presents an opportunity to commodify rural resources and assets for consumption. As a result, it is reflective of increasing consumption-related uses of rural spaces (Holmes, 2006) and is capable of meeting a growing desire for rural amenities (Argent et al., 2007). On the demand side, rural tourism has been growing steadily with a “rise of a lifestyle-led and leisure-oriented society” (Woods, 2005, p. 173). This growth in demand has occurred alongside a growth in supply, resulting in increasingly homogenous rural destinations (Cleave & Arku, 2015) and a resultant prioritization of destination uniqueness and ‘authenticity’ (Canadian Tourism Commission [CTC], 2004; Schnell, 2011). This desire for authenticity makes a neo-endogenous approach to tourism development particularly apt due to its rootedness in place and necessitation of public participation and local resources (Ray, 1999).

2.2.3.1. Place Branding

In efforts to communicate uniqueness, place branding is a prominent development tool that uses visual and written texts to construct and project an attractive and distinct narrative about place (Cleave & Arku, 2015; Lee et al., 2015; Messely, Dessein, & Lauwers, 2009; Papadopoulos, 2004). Place branding’s use has increased as communities become more entrepreneurial following de-industrialization, neoliberal reform, and resultant disinterest by the state in place promotion (Cleave & Arku, 2015). Though most frequently associated with the tourism sector and destination branding, the agricultural sector also uses place branding to
promote domestic purchasing by evoking civic or nationalistic pride (Papadopoulos, 2004). At its core, place branding is used to combat a growing same-ness persistent within globalizing markets (Messely et al., 2009; Mettepenningen et al., 2012) and increase local control while reducing vulnerability (Donner et al., 2016).

Place branding relies on the promotion of ‘territorial capital’ or “the specific assets that a rural area can draw upon to differentiate itself from others and thereby obtain visibility in global policy and market environments” (Renting et al., 2008, p. 379). An alternative conceptualization is that of ‘countryside capital’ within the rural tourism sector (Garrod, Wornell, & Youell, 2006). These conceptualizations propose that the sustainable use and investment in capital is integral to the ongoing success of rural tourism (Garrod et al., 2006) and countryside capital assets can be tangible, intangible, or temporal (e.g. physical landscape, cultural traditions, historical sites) in nature (Donner et al., 2016; Garrod et al., 2006). Importantly, these assets may not necessarily be tourism related but provide benefits to tourism businesses nonetheless. Effectively, anything that contributes to the character of a place can be conceived of as countryside capital. This may include local identities, agrarian aesthetic, and other working landscapes that represent the uniqueness and marketable image of that region. By protecting and investing in countryside capital (tangible, intangible, and temporal) the region is able to establish a clear and competitive destination image that is more capable of fulfilling visitor expectations (Garrod et al., 2006; McClincheay & Carmichael, 2010).

Since place branding relies on social and countryside capital to provide a distinctive image, it is also reliant on local support (Donner et al., 2016). Several studies have noted the need for buy-in and cooperation by local stakeholders for brand success (Cawley, 2009; Donner et al., 2016; Sonnino, 2004). To meet the expectations of visitors, it is necessary to minimize the gap between brand promise and delivery (Papadopoulos, 2004), which is often accomplished through domestic brand performance. Therefore, promoting a domestic sense of ownership over the brand is able to reinforce and legitimize it (Vuorinen & Vos, 2013). One study has suggested that the strength of the brand is dependent on the strength and breadth of stakeholder relationships (Vuorinen & Vos, 2013). By reflecting, and often reinforcing, local identities, the brand is best able to represent a reality that will be encountered by visitors (Messely et al., 2009). As a result, the alienation of potential stakeholder groups or the absence of different perspectives
and identities can ultimately lead to brand failure (Vuorinen & Vos, 2013) and a wide gap between brand promise and delivery.

2.2.3.2. Food & Place

One way many rural regions or “places” have attempted to differentiate and brand themselves is through culinary tourism (Che, 2009; Everett, 2012; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006). Referred to as culinary, food, or gastronomic tourism within the literature, broadly it is “the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region” (Everett, 2012, p. 536; Lin et al., 2011). Culinary tourism is a growing subsector and the diversification of culinary attractions and the promotion of local foods are partially in response to, and a driver of, an increase in food-motivated travel (Everett, 2012). Since “food, cuisine, and culinary traditions are among the most foundational elements of culture” (Dallen & Amos, 2013, p. 275), they are commonly used as a means of differentiation within place branding (Everett, 2012). Tourists are drawn to a food’s ability to represent local tradition and culture, which inherently differentiates it not only from other places but also products found ‘at home’ (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Sims, 2010; Dallen & Amos, 2013).

Culinary tourism has grown rapidly and widely, due in part to its ability to align with the various tourist expectations and uses of rural spaces. Tourists arrive with their own perception of how a rural space, particularly a space of production, should appear; often this is rooted in historical images of a bygone era that use traditional production methods to produce traditional and wholesome foods (Everett, 2012; Dallen & Amos, 2012; Hjalager, 1996). Tourist destinations have the capability to alter or stage production methods to appease this desire for authenticity and nostalgia by incorporating historical and/or cultural aspects into attractions (Sims, 2010; Everett, 2012). Though tourists are often aware that what is presented is not always an entirely ‘authentic’ experience, as producers will alter behaviour and presentation to ensure an enjoyable experience without undermining production activities and to align with customer sensibilities, they are willing to look past this deception because eating local foods is a method of escaping an industrialized world (Everett, 2012; Marsden, 1999). Additionally, this association with authenticity and often environmental protectionism has resulted in the increasing link between ‘quality’ and ‘local’. Quality foods are often perceived to be those that are authentic,
traditional, healthy, and wholesome, which are values that are implicitly tied to place (Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000).

Rural regions use culinary tourism to diversify the economy while simultaneously supporting farmers, often allowing them to remain in the sector (Everett & Slocum, 2013). Farms are able to partner with regional restaurants to ensure high-quality, fresh, and in-season produce for the chef while also creating a consistent market for the farm. This is common in high-end restaurants in Niagara (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006) and has been used to support farmers in Muskoka (Lee et al., 2015). Tourism and development organizations often evoke the idea of ‘terroir’ and propose that food grown and processed in a geographically bounded area will have subtle variations in taste as a result of their locality, with implications of better taste and higher quality (Lee et al., 2015). Though critics claim that the majority of tourists are unable to detect these variations (Watts et al., 2005), Ilbery et al. note that “the recent consumer shift towards more ‘local’ and ‘natural’ products is nurturing this approach and encouraging quality production systems to become ‘re-embedded’ in local territories” (2005, p. 119). Many regions find success in culinary tourism endeavors by developing close working relationships with local farms and forming synergistic relationships that are mutually beneficial (Lee et al., 2015; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Everett, 2012).

2.3. Agritourism

Agritourism is broadly defined as “the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural, or agribusiness operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation” (Che, 2009, p. 108). It is a sub-set of rural tourism (Ainley & Smale, 2009; Clarke, 1999) and has a long history of use in Europe as a method of supplementing agricultural income by fully using on-farm resources such as familial (particularly female) labour (Hjalager, 1996; Sharpley & Vass, 2006), and otherwise providing additional on-farm services outside of commercial agricultural production (Bowler et al., 1996; Busby & Rendle, 2000; Frater, 1983; Veeck et al., 2016). In recent years, uptake of agritourism as an on-farm activity has been increasing within North America (Barbieri, 2010; Barbieri et al., 2016; Veeck et al., 2016), perhaps in response to ongoing agricultural restructuring. As a result of agritourism’s (growing) prominence, there is an expanding body of literature addressing various facets of the sector. The following section will highlight relevant subsections of the
literature, starting with a characterization of the consumer, then exploring two of the main lenses used: agritourism as farm diversification and agritourism as rural development.

Agritourism can be tightly linked with culinary tourism within the broader rural tourism sector and there is opportunity for overlap between the two industries. While culinary tourism is primarily focused on the consumption of local food or drink, agritourism is focused on the experience of being on a working farm. Indeed, this distinction may blur when the farm experience also includes on-farm restaurants or dining opportunities (e.g. dinner in the orchard), or in the case of estate winery visitation, where on-winery experience is interwoven with the consumption of local wines, but the two can often be held in separate but related spheres. Agritourism is a natural companion to culinary tourism for those tourists who seek ‘authentic’ food- or drink-related experiences and, as the use of culinary tourism within rural development grows, there is opportunity for agritourism enterprises to target similar audiences and leverage their connection to the local food system more fully.

2.3.1. Characterizing the Agritourism Consumer

While a greater understanding of agritourism consumers is a noted research gap (Ainley & Smale, 2009), the literature notes some common characteristics and expectations. Typically, agritourism has the greatest appeal to aging (Ainley & Smale, 2009; Che, 2009) or mixed generational consumers (Che, 2009) who originate from urban or suburban locations (Che, 2009; Hjalager, 1996). Agritourism often appeals to urbanites because it is an opportunity to reconnect to rural spaces (Che, 2009, p. 108; Frater, 1983), and caters to a sense of nostalgia for an agrarian past (Hjalager, 1996; Veeck et al., 2016). In some ways, agritourism can act as a “bridge reconnecting urban dwellers with agriculture and rural life” (Barbieri et al., 2016, p. 1101).

Overall, agritourism consumers seek three broad, often overlapping, types of benefits from this ‘bridge’. First, agritourism can fulfill a desire for experiential tourism, where reconnection is achieved through participating in activities like fruit picking (Che, 2009; Barbieri et al., 2016). Reconnection with rural spaces can also align with reconnecting with rural values, with a strong emphasis on family and outdoor experiences (Che, 2009; Veeck et al., 2016). Second, agritourism can also fulfill a desire for education about both agriculture and rural lifestyles (Ainley & Kline, 2014; Barbieri et al., 2016; Frater, 1983), particularly by consumers
looking to reconnect with agricultural production in alignment with growing consumer concerns about food safety (Ainley & Smale, 2009). Finally, agritourism can be a site of relaxation and observation; for many visitors, there is value in observing agricultural activities within the farmscape. Active agricultural surroundings are ‘consumed’ as surely as a piece of fruit (Barbieri et al., 2016; Che, 2009; Flanigan et al., 2015). Notably, one Canadian study reported that education and rural reconnection are not significant drivers of agritourism consumers (Ainley & Smale, 2009). However, this study may not be representative of the average agritourism consumer because their sample was exclusive to visitors with at least one overnight stay (Ainley & Smale, 2009), while, in North America, most agritourism consumers are day-trippers (Barbieri et al., 2016; Haghiri & Okech, 2011). Additionally, there is some debate regarding visitors’ expectations of modern, mechanized agriculture within the farmscape. While some studies note that consumers may be off-put by the use of modern, mechanized farming because it fails to align with idyllic imagery of agriculture (Hjalager, 1996; Busby & Rendle, 2000), others posit that agritourism acts to jam this notion of the idyllic countryside due to the inclusion and consumers’ appreciation of mechanized agriculture (Flanigan et al., 2015).

2.3.2. Agritourism as Diversification

The lens of farm diversification is commonly applied and discussed within the agritourism literature. With a focus on on-farm, or ‘private’ benefits (Flanigan et al., 2015), agritourism easily fits within this classification. As within the diversification literature, agritourism literature typically explores agricultural enterprises that use agritourism to financially supplement more ‘conventional’ agricultural production (Barbieri et al., 2008; Frater, 1983; Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Schilling et al., 2014; Veeck et al., 2016), as well as for other, socio-cultural motives (Evans & Ilbery, 1993). Agritourism can be typified as a vertical growth strategy because it builds on and adds value to existing resources (Inwood & Sharp, 2012) and can be classified as either a deepening activity through the use of alternative marketing or a broadening activity through value added or on-farm recreational activities (see Table 2.1; Barbieri et al., 2008; Renting et al., 2008). Agritourism studies contribute to the diversification literature by exploring concrete examples of on-farm diversification which commonly employ multiple diversification activities, such as alternative marketing and on-farm recreation through tourism (Barbieri et al., 2008; Evans & Ilbery, 1993; Renting et al., 2008). Research into the
motivations behind initial diversification into agritourism and long-term goals is prevalent within the agritourism literature and have begun to reveal the complex rationales underlying these decisions.

2.3.2.1. Farmers’ Motivations for Diversification

Though it is generally accepted that there are both financial and non-financial motivations behind diversification, there is ongoing debate within the literature around what the primary motivations are. Some scholars suggest that this lack of consensus stems from the spatial context of the farms studied (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). With that said, there seems to be growing consensus that in North America and Europe, financial motivations are the most prominent. However, non-financial motivations remain important in farmers’ behaviours and sense of accomplishment (Barbieri, 2010; Flanigan et al., 2015; Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004; Nickerson et al., 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Schilling et al., 2014) and many farmers have “expressed several motivations simultaneously” (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007, p. 448).

The literature highlights several different financial motivations. Increased income is the most commonly cited motivation (Frater, 1983; Hjalager, 1996; Schilling et al., 2014; Veeck et al., 2016; Nickerson et al., 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004), followed by the desire to offset a falling or fluctuating income from agriculture which may originate from seasonal fluctuations or increasing global competition (Frater, 1983; Nickerson et al., 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Barbieri, 2010; Schilling et al., 2014). The literature also featured market-oriented and opportunistic motivations. For example, many farmers noted the desire to maximize the use of farm resources, commonly labour or farm buildings (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Barbieri, 2010; Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004), while others wished to expand their brand awareness (Schilling et al., 2014) or diversify current market offerings and capitalize on existing market opportunities (Schilling et al., 2014; Barbieri, 2010). As Busby and Rendle noted, diversifying into agritourism is often “about providing income which can make the difference between viability or not” (2000, p. 640), which is particularly prevalent in small-scale farms where production, and therefore access to commodity markets, is constrained by land holding size (Veeck et al., 2016; Schilling et al., 2014).
While the documentation of financial motivations is growing in consensus and prominence, the actual profitability and financial contributions of agritourism continues to be questioned. Several studies have concluded that the financial contributions of agritourism are limited (Frater, 1983; Hjalager, 1996; Busby & Rendle, 2000), particularly when compared to the financial returns of more traditional agricultural activity (Hjalager, 1996). However, there is a growing number of qualitative and quantitative studies that suggest that the “economic impact of agricultural tourism is significant in terms of income, wages, employment, and tax revenues” (Veeck et al., 2016, p. 427), particularly in near urban spaces (Schilling et al., 2014). Veeck, Hallett, Che, and Veeck (2016) noted that in Michigan, agritourism has evolved into a diverse sector offering a broad range of activities while simultaneously hybridizing to include off-farm markets, resulting in a financially viable enterprise for farmers. This echoes perceptions of social and financial success noted in the United Kingdom (Sharpley & Vass, 2006), Canada (Barbieri, 2010), and New Jersey, USA (Schilling et al., 2014). However, several authors have observed a ‘hollowing out of the middle’ within agritourism, where there is a widening gap between large and small enterprises in season length, revenue, and employment, and a diminishing of mid-sized enterprises (Veeck et al., 2016; Hjalager, 1996), which mirrors ongoing trends within the agricultural sector as a whole.

In addition to financial motivations, there are a number of non-financial motivations which are commonly cited as important rationales within the literature. While there is no singular frame of reference for these non-financial motivations and researchers have used terms such as social, cultural, or sociocultural (Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004; Nickerson et al., 2001), lifestyle (Shilling et al., 2014), or intrinsic (Barbieri, 2010), at their core they hold a peripheral relationship to income or revenue in common. Compared to the noted financial motivations, non-financial motivations are much more variable within the literature, despite some attempts to standardize the phrasings (see Nickerson et al., 2001). Non-financial motivations may include: consumer education (Nickerson et al., 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004), an improved quality of life (Frater, 1983; Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004; Barbieri, 2010), meeting new people (Frater, 1983; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Barbieri, 2010), enjoying a farm lifestyle (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), or to preserve agricultural land and heritage (Veeck et al., 2016; Nickerson et al., 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), amongst others. Despite a growing consensus on the primary importance of financial motivations in North America and Europe,
non-financial motivations appear to have greater importance as motivators in Australia and New Zealand (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). Additionally, a study of 1,135 surveyed American agritourism providers found that farmers felt they had greater success in achieving important non-financial goals than financial goals (Barbieri, 2010). As a result, non-financial goals had a greater contribution to farmers’ satisfaction with their decision to diversify into agritourism (Barbieri, 2010; Shaprley & Vass, 2006).

2.3.2.2. Common Challenges for Development

Though agritourism is often chosen for its ability to supplement income and contribute to work-life satisfaction more generally, it is not without its challenges. Within the literature, there are four general categories of challenges noted: physical, financial, social, and institutional. First, physical challenges may include being difficult to access by urban populations (Flanigan et al., 2015) or being located in non-idyllic surroundings (Sharpley & Vass, 2006). This may inhibit visitation and diminish the financial feasibility of the enterprise. Having a large amount of distance between farms may also be a challenge due to inaccessibility and a lack of critical mass (Che et al., 2005). Second, financially unstable farms that are unable to face potential investment risks, wait for long-term returns, or front the necessary capital to initially develop their enterprise to align with consumer expectations of quality can have greater difficulties initially developing their enterprise or persisting within the sector (Clarke, 1999; Hjalager, 1996; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Sonnino, 2004). Often, financial challenges are also associated with farm size. For example, some European studies have noted that small farms are less likely to diversify successfully due to related financial instability (Hjalager, 1996; Sonnino, 2004), while one study in Michigan noted that small farms are more likely to be successful due to their financial flexibility resulting from a lower investment in costly land or technology (Veeck et al., 2016). Third, social challenges may include a personal lack of willingness or ability to adapt to a new, service-oriented role, which can inhibit successful diversification due to a perceived move away from so-called ‘real’ farming and resultant changes in farmer identity (Sharpley & Vass, 2006). Relatedly, community or family tensions may result from decisions to change land use or deescalate technology use to better align with consumer expectations of the consumption countryside (Hjalager, 1996). Finally, institutional challenges such as government policy and legislation can encourage and/or inhibit farm tourism development, particularly when there is a
lack of clarity or policy is introduced at different institutional levels (Barbieri et al., 2016; Frater, 1983).

### 2.3.3. Agritourism as Rural Development

The other lens that is applied to agritourism research is rural development. However, while many studies mention rural development as an aspect of agritourism (see Schilling et al., 2014; Barbieri et al., 2016; Busby & Rendle, 2000), few examine it in a meaningful way. With that said, agritourism falls neatly under the umbrella of rural tourism and is often aligned with culinary tourism and neo-endogenous approaches more broadly. In Europe, agritourism is often incentivized by government as a catalyst for rural development, particularly in areas that traditionally relied on agriculture and have since felt a decline (Boyne & Hall, 2004; Hjalager, 1996; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). As Ollenburg and Buckley state, in some regions “farm tourism is used as a policy instrument to rejuvenate regional economies and preserve rural societies and landscapes” (2007, p. 444). This highlights a potential dual purpose of agritourism promotion: economic rejuvenation and rural socio-cultural preservation, as explored below (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006; Sharpley & Vass, 2006).

Though few in number, some studies have noted several economic and sociocultural benefits to the community. Agritourism is said to stimulate local economies (Barbieri et al., 2016; Sonnino, 2004), with a study in Michigan noting a contribution of sales exceeding $430 million per annum by agritourism farms (Veeck et al., 2016). However, the actual contribution to employment continues to be debated. Several studies noted a minimal increase in job creation due to a typical reliance on family labour (Frater, 1983; Hjalager, 1996; M. Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006; Sharpley & Vass, 2006), while that same study in Michigan noted an impactful contribution to both full and part-time employment that also provided transferable job training for future employment opportunities (Veeck et al., 2016). Additional sociocultural community benefits include outreach and greater public education about food and farming, which aligns with a growing societal concern and awareness of food safety (Flanigan et al., 2015), as well as a potential move towards low-impact agricultural methods to satisfy tourist desire for authenticity and align with growing societal concerns about human and environmental health (Ilbery et al., 2005; Sonnino, 2004).
Despite these benefits, agritourism development can create some challenges within the community, which in large part mirror the critiques of neo-endogenous development. First, there is concern that development and the (economic) benefits accrued may be uneven due to localized power structures and variable ability to participate (Krawchenko, 2016; Sonnino, 2004; Woods, 2011). Since rural communities and agricultural sectors are heterogeneous, it may be difficult to achieve consensus through decision making processes and the individuals and enterprises with greater financial or social capital assets may be in a greater position to participate in or benefit from agritourism development. This is similar to the challenging necessity of broad stakeholder involvement in successful place branding and the simultaneous representation of many interests and perspectives (Vuorinen & Vos, 2013). Some authors also caution that agritourism promotion must be supported by the local community or will otherwise face push-back (Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006; Sonnino, 2004). As noted in one study, “rural economic and community growth is good, but not at the expense of residents who currently live there” (Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006, p. 7). This is particularly important within rural spaces where the impacts of tourism, such as greater road traffic, may be felt more acutely. Finally, agritourism can be disruptive to local systems because providers are balancing tourism duties with agricultural duties and may not meet local expectations or demands (Sonnino, 2004).

2.3.3.1. Marketing & Networks

Though a rural development lens is rarely explicitly applied to the analysis of agritourism marketing or networks, this literature commonly has close linkages to rural development concepts more broadly and countryside capital and neo-endogenous development and tourism more specifically. These commonalities include a focus on domestic growth and resources, local stakeholder collaboration and community building, and the use of place-based experiences that are rooted in local community to create strong tourism products. With that said, a more nuanced understanding of the role of marketing and networks in the financial success of agritourism enterprises and their successful integration into the surrounding community is needed within the literature.

There are many benefits to networking or collaboration for agritourism providers. Collaborative marketing is one of the most common types of networking (Che et al., 2005; Frater, 1983; Hjölager, 1996) because it allows participants to leverage limited resources more
effectively (Clarke, 1999) and share marketing and other tourism-related costs (Che et al., 2005; Frater, 1983). Knowledge sharing is another major benefit to agritourism providers, often providing sources of product inspiration, efficiency measures, and other business-related information (Ainley & Kline, 2014; Che et al., 2005; Clarke, 1999; Frater, 1983). Notably, one study on agritourism networks in Michigan observed that cost and knowledge sharing commonly spilled over to other agricultural activities once relationships were established between farmers, indicating that agritourism networks may have concrete benefits for the agricultural sector as well (Che et al., 2005). On the other hand, a Danish study indicated that, although beneficial, agritourism networks were considered weaker than other, pre-existing, networks between farmers within an agricultural context (Hjalager, 1996), so the agricultural sector benefits found in the Michigan study may already exist in other locations. Other benefits include a sense of empowerment and camaraderie within networks (Ainley & Kline, 2014; Che et al., 2005) and an increase in tourist draw through clustering (Che et al., 2005).

Clustering, a tactic commonly used by wineries, helps to build tourism destinations which can yield group and individual benefits (Che et al., 2005; Lazarus, 1998). This tactic is often facilitated through a combination of vertical and horizontal networking between local institutions, agritourism providers, and complementary sectors (Che, 2009; Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006), though one study notes the necessity of local leadership within stakeholder groups for the success of these networks (Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006). When successful, these networks benefit the region by providing an alleged place-based identity through local foods (Che, 2009; Che et al., 2005) and may benefit agritourism farms by building capacity through administrative support and skill building (Clarke, 1999; Frater, 1983). Furthermore, in a study on UK farm stays, participants identified the development of tourism clusters and local marketing consortia as areas that would benefit the most from public sector support (Sharpley & Vass, 2006).

Though there are apparent benefits to both vertical and horizontal networking, these relationships may be leveraged most effectively at different scales. In a study conducted with members of the UK Farm Holiday Bureau and farm stay tourists, external linkages were employed in different ways at different scales to maximize their efficacy (Clarke, 1999). For example, at the regional level, members connected with not only regional tourism organizations
but also regional education, community, and capacity development organizations as a method of rooting themselves within local communities (Clarke, 1999), which caters to tourists’ desire for authentic, placed based experiences (Clarke, 1999; Schnell, 2011). At the national level, the organization leveraged its relationships with national and international tourism agencies to market their services more broadly, which exceeded the marketing abilities of the regional or farm level individually and benefited the organization as a whole with a resultant trickledown effect of greater visitation (Clarke, 1999). This case study may demonstrate the necessity of combining vertical networking, with organizations who have a greater reach, with horizontal networking, with other farmers and local communities to maximize the benefits felt at the farm level.

2.4. Summary of Context

The literature review has set out to illustrate the economic and social context for the development and operation of agritourism enterprises in rural regions. Within these regions, two major ongoing and interrelated processes were presented: agricultural restructuring and broad rural change and development.

The agricultural sector is experiencing ongoing restructuring that is a result of shifting policy and program arrangements at the Provincial and National levels and globalizing commodity markets more broadly. This has led to the continued strengthening and expansion of agri-businesses and food corporations and has cultivated a ‘get big or get out’ mentality for agricultural enterprises within the sector. While some farms are in a position to buy in to this so-called productivist agriculture, others are unwilling or unable to transition and are pushed towards departure from the sector or the development of adaptation strategies.

One of the social implications of agricultural restructuring has been the social and economic distancing of large agricultural enterprises from rural communities. Alongside the diminishing prominence of production uses of rural space, there has been simultaneous growth in the demand for consumption opportunities and rural amenities that are reflective of changing societal values. As a result, there is a growing appreciation of the need for rural development planning that encompasses and caters to the multiplicity of old and new demands. Neo-endogenous rural development is one prominent approach to navigating and directing these
evolving demands through the use and cultivation of local assets, otherwise conceptualized as countryside capital.

A common strategy for development that is often paired with neo-endogenous approaches is the development of rural tourism. Fostering and promoting rural tourism is capable of meeting the demand for rural amenities and the growing appreciation of the countryside as a purveyor of goods and services including foods or outdoor activities that run counter to the urban experience. Increasingly, the rural tourism market is using place branding as a tool to construct a distinctive and memorable image of place, to convey an experience, and increase the competitive advantage of a destination. Culinary tourism, in particular, is a growing facet of rural tourism and place brands as tourists actively seek out ‘authentic’ experiences that are embedded in place. Food within the rural context is often strongly associated with place by tourists and brand managers alike due to its ability to embody culture and tradition.

Agritourism is a farm diversification strategy that lays at the interface of production and consumption uses of rural space. It is a strategy that is employed by agricultural enterprises that have adapted their enterprise to on-farm tourism provision in efforts to supplement agricultural income, amongst other, non-financial motivations. Within the context of rural development and ongoing rural change, agritourism is also capable of meeting tourists’ desires for authentic rural experiences and is aligned with culinary tourism trends. Though large production-oriented agricultural firms are increasingly distanced from rural communities, there is some evidence that agritourism enterprises are able to bridge this divide and reconnect via horizontal and vertical linkages and broader social and economic benefits. As the corporatization of commodity production-oriented agriculture continues and the social and economic contexts of rural regions continue to evolve, agritourism may be one opportunity for small- to medium-sized enterprises to capitalize on the growing desire for rural amenities and contribute to development strategies while remaining within the agricultural sector.
CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODS

For my research, I chose a case study approach to direct the collection and analysis of my data. I chose this approach because it allowed for an in-depth and more nuanced understanding of the processes and meanings behind agritourism development (DeLyser et al., 2010; Clifford et al., 2010) and its common presence within agritourism research (see Che, 2009; Hjalager, 1996). While case based approaches may not be widely representative of all cases, they are often theoretically generalizable (Tonkiss, 2004). In the case of Essex County, I believe it is representative of processes undertaken in many rural areas in Ontario while simultaneously acknowledging that it lies within its own, unique, context.

Within the case study approach, grounded theory influenced the research process. I used this inductive method to contribute to and further develop current understandings of agritourism through the careful reading and analysis of collected data (Seale, 2004; DeLyser et al, 2010; Castree et al, 2013). I chose this theoretical approach because it allows for the flexibility and adaptability that is often necessary for case study research (Neuman, 2014; Clifford & Valentine, 2010). Furthermore, there is no pre-existing dominant conceptual or theoretical framework within agritourism research, which makes an inductive process more suitable.

3.1. Description of Study Site

Situated between Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair, Essex County is the south-western most county in Ontario, bordering Michigan to its west and Chatham-Kent County to its east (Figure 3.1). It is comprised of seven municipalities and lies adjacent to the City of Windsor, which is often included within broader governing structures (e.g. economic development).

Economically, the three leading industries within the county are: agribusiness, information and communication technology, and manufacturing (County of Essex, 2014). The County is in a state of flux with regards to employment opportunities in manufacturing and agribusiness, which has incentivized regional development and regeneration initiatives (Thompson, 2016). Despite decreasing rural populations (Statistics Canada, 2001, 2011a, 2011b) and a decline in GDP contribution (Thompson, 2016), agriculture remains prominent in County identity due to its long history within the region. In response to economic uncertainty, the county
is currently fostering a tourism package that focuses on various tourism offerings, including outdoor recreation, conservation areas, and local cuisine.

Figure 3.1. Essex County, Ontario, outlined in red, borders Detroit, Michigan, and Chatham-Kent County, Ontario (adapted from Google Maps, 2017).

The agricultural sector within Essex County can be divided into field crops and greenhouse crops. Field crops are dominated by oilseed and grains production with 65% of the total number of county farms, followed by field vegetables at 6%, and fruit at 4% (Statistics Canada, 2011c). Though accounting for only 9% of farms (Statistics Canada, 2011c), greenhouse production, particularly of tomatoes, dominates the farm cash receipts for the county and accounts for 65% of the total crop commodity receipts (Figure 3.2). Half of the province’s area under glass or plastic is contained within Essex County and it accounts for 80% of the province’s greenhouse vegetable production (Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2014). Within the county, 65% of production farms are categorized as small by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA, 2014a). Following trends within Ontario and the Nation more broadly (see Figure 3.3, Statistics Canada, 2011d), the number of farms within
the County is declining while average farm area is increasing (Jones Consulting Group Ltd., 2014).

Figure 3.2. Essex County farm cash receipts for main commodities for 2013 (adapted from OMAFRA, 2014a)

Figure 3.3. Ontario trends in farms numbers and average farm size from 1996 to 2016 (adapted from OMAFRA, 2016).
Essex County’s agricultural sector has undergone and continues to undergo major restructuring. The North Shore Lake Erie portion of the county, which is currently favoured by tomato growers for its suitable climate and soil conditions, was previously dominated by tobacco growers (Ramsey, 2009). Currently, the region is seeing a decline in demand for field tomatoes, exemplified by the recent Heinz plant closure in Leamington which affected roughly 1000 people in Essex and Chatham-Kent Counties (CBC News, 2014). Due to this closure, many farmers were forced to cease field tomato production in favour of seed corn production, a lower value commodity (Wells, 2014). Though the Leamington story continues to evolve, it serves to highlight the region’s agricultural uncertainty and the increasing competition from international markets. Increasingly, viticulturalists are also favouring the region’s soil for grape and wine production, which represents another direction of agricultural restructuring.

Encompassed by the Lake Erie North Shore wine appellation, which hosts 14 Ontario Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) wineries (VQA Ontario, 2017), Essex County exhibits a growing viticulture sector. The Lake Erie North Shore is one of three designated wine appellations within the province, alongside Niagara and Prince Edward County. It includes a single sub-appellation: South Islands (VQA Ontario, 2016). Appellations are designated based on unique growing conditions, including location, soil, topography, and climate (VQA Ontario, 2017). Conceptually, the term ‘appellation’ draws on the notion of terroir, or the embeddedness of place-based growing conditions within agricultural products (Watts et al., 2005). Though this tradition emerges out of French wine production, it has been widely adopted by many tourism initiatives that seek to promote place-based culinary tourism with a focus on the unique characteristics of local produce (Lee et al., 2015). As the prominence of Ontario wines continues to grow in the domestic and international markets, new tourism opportunities will likely arise for viticultural and agricultural producers.

The tourism base for southwest Ontario is substantial; provincially it has the second highest number of visitors and the fourth highest visitor spending, totalling $1.3 billion (MTC, 2012). Overall, the region’s tourism package is guided by the Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation, one of thirteen provincially mandated Regional Tourism Organizations, which was established in 2011 (Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation [SWOTC], 2017). There are three primary strategic directions being pursued by SWOTC to capitalize on current tourism trends
and highlight the assets of the region: “culinary,” “waterfront,” and “significant event opportunities” (SWOTC, 2017). While the Regional Tourism Organization promotes the region more broadly, developing products such as themed regional day trip and driving route suggestions, it also works with each of the nine Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) within its boundaries to allow for county-specific tourism development. The DMO responsible for tourism development in Essex County is Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI).

Essex County is an appropriate case to fulfill my research objectives because of the evidence that suggests a simultaneous increase in efforts to market the area as a tourism destination alongside an agricultural sector that is both economically and socially prominent but undergoing restructuring. Furthermore, the presence of wineries and the County’s position within a designated wine appellation has the potential to further promote local agriculture (as a companion to local wine) and experiential tourism. As a result, small- to medium-sized farms in the area that are looking for an alternative to a wholesale transition into a commodity production-focused mode of agriculture are presented the opportunity to align themselves with the tourism industry through diversification into agritourism. Additionally, the processes occurring in Essex County are reflective of similar broad-level processes occurring in other Southwestern Ontario counties with respect to growing promotion and development of wine and local food in tandem with restructuring agricultural sectors. Essex County presents an opportunity to explore one trajectory of development.

3.2. Data Collection & Analysis

I approached data collection using method triangulation, which is common amongst case study research (Bickman & Rog, 1998). I used web-based searches to identify and collect soft copies of relevant promotional materials and additional primary sources, alongside a field collection of promotional materials in hard copy. I also conducted semi-structured interviews within Essex County. I used these interviews to obtain the viewpoints of three stakeholder groups within the sector: the County’s DMO, agritourism farm owners, and winery owners. The purpose of multiple approaches was to improve the robustness of the data and subsequent analysis and results (Neuman, 2014; Clifford et al., 2010; Hewson, 2006). The grounded theory approach also influenced the process by allowing emergent themes to direct later data collection, particularly at the organization level (Seale, 2004).
I also triangulated my data analysis methods. In total, I used three different data analysis methods: background secondary source review, discourse analysis, and interview coding. I chose to triangulate my analysis because no single approach was able to fully illuminate the complexities and emergent themes of the data (Hewson, 2006). I reviewed related secondary sources before and after interviews, which helped to direct subsequent data collection and analysis and further contextualized my data (Clifford et al., 2010; Flowerdew & Martin, 2005). The discourse analysis was used in conjunction with the review of secondary sources to supplement and augment those results. Finally, using NVivo software, I completed open and axial coding on interview transcripts, following an inductive approach to categorization (Seale, 2004; Flowerdew & Martin, 2005), which was chosen to complement and align with my grounded theory approach and direct subsequent analysis. Because my interview sample size was limited, I was able to keep my interview data contextualized during analysis and avoid fragmentation, a common critique of coding (Seale, 2004). Analysis often occurred in tandem with data collection and data were re-examined multiple times to reflect the emergent themes (Seale, 2004).

3.2.1. County & Organization Level

To better understand the recent growth and currently emerging forms of agritourism at the County and regional levels, I collected and reviewed relevant background documents, completed a discourse analysis of promotional materials, and conducted semi-structured interviews with key organization representatives. The benefits of this approach were three-fold. First, exploring strategic initiatives to promote and support agritourism allowed me to understand the context of agritourism development within Essex County more fully (Clifford et al., 2010). This had the additional benefit of allowing me to adapt subsequent interview protocols to best reflect local context. Second, I was able to identify key stakeholders at the organization level and gain a better understanding of their motivations. Third, I was able to discern prominent marketing approaches and themes amongst promotional material, which contributed to a greater understanding of current approaches to agritourism in branding initiatives (Frochot, 2003).

3.2.1.1. Background Document Review

Objective one began with a review of recent web-based secondary sources about agritourism or culinary tourism within Essex County, Ontario and the broader Southwest Ontario
tourism region. A careful reading of these documents provided a better understanding of how agritourism was executed and used at the County and regional levels and identified initiatives that promoted the sector (Clifford & Valentine, 2010; Davies & Gilbert, 1992). Additionally, it allowed me to discern repeated ideas, key words, and aspirations amongst documents, which contributed to my analysis. For my sample, I used web-based searches using key terms and snowball sampling through linked web pages. I chose web-based documents because this is the dominant form of marketing and information dissemination (Cleave & Arku, 2015). From the available resources, I selected the most recent publications because they would best reflect the contemporary agritourism sector within Essex County. The types of documents I analysed included but were not limited to: tourism brochures, maps, guides, and websites, strategic plans, tourism reports, and agritourism fact sheets. Organizations or government offices from Ontario authored all of the documents, with the majority originating from Essex County.

3.2.1.2. Discourse Analysis

I used a discourse analysis as part of my review of background documents, particularly of promotional materials. Discourse analysis is the inductive process of establishing an argument based on textual evidence (Tonkiss, 2004). Texts, in this regard, may be written or visual in nature. This type of analysis develops analytical themes based on a close reading of the content and omissions of texts (Tonkiss, 2004; Hannam & Knox, 2005). I chose this form of analysis because it enabled me to begin to uncover the construction of social reality (Tonkiss, 2004, p. 373) and the embeddedness of power and values by key stakeholders within the documents (Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Hannam & Knox, 2005). Discourse analysis of selected promotional materials by key stakeholders is common amongst critical tourism literature (see Pritchard & Morgan, 2001; Frochot, 2003) because it facilitates a deeper engagement with textual and interview data.

To complete the analysis, I selected web and print 2016 promotional materials produced or endorsed by TWEPI, the Essex County Federation of Agriculture, and the Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation because they best represented the image of agriculture and agritourism projected for consumers and visitors. Within these texts, I selected sections or materials pertaining to cuisine, wine, agritourism, or agriculture because they provided the “richest source of analytical material” as per the needs of my study (Tonkiss, 2004, p. 377). In total, I analysed
ten brochures, guides, webpages, and maps (Table 3.1), which resulted in three overarching analytical themes: product, place and landscape, and the farmer. These results contributed to my understanding of the image of agritourism and agriculture these stakeholders present to consumers and how the reality of Essex County is being constructed for different groups. This is crucial in understanding the role of agritourism as a feature of the regional brand.

Table 3.1. Agritourism-related marketing materials used in the discourse analysis of 2016 materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Publication Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Collaborators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visit Windsor Essex Website:</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>TWEPI¹</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm to Table Webpage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Drink Webpage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culinary Webpage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wineries Webpage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 Official Visitor Guide</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>TWEPI</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover Lake Erie North Shore Wine Route</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>TWEPI</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.E. Heart Local Website</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>TWEPI</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grown Right Here. Website</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>WEEDC²</td>
<td>TWEPI, ECFA³, Essex CFDC⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Webpage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Buy Local? Webpage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUY LOCAL Map – 4th Ed.</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>ECFA</td>
<td>TWEPI, Farm &amp; Food Care Ontario</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island  
² Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation  
³ Essex County Federation of Agriculture  
⁴ Essex Community Futures Development Corporation

3.2.1.3. Semi-Structured Interviews – Organization Level

I used a key informant interview with representatives of Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI) to supplement and enhance the data found through document review (Drew et al., 2006) and to gain on-the-ground knowledge from experts in the tourism sector. Semi-structured interviews are a common qualitative method, during which the researcher uses “predetermined but open-ended questions” to gain information about the informant’s views and experiences (Ayres, 2008, p. 811; Castree et al., 2013). I chose this type of interview because the
convosational format allowed informants to elaborate and explore topics they felt were most important (Clifford et al., 2010; Castree et al., 2013). This allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the current context and nature of strategic initiatives than is available through written documents (Clifford et al., 2010; Neuman, 2014; Drew et al., 2006). I identified TWEPI as a key promotional and supportive organization during the document review and subsequent analysis. I initially contacted representatives through cold-calls and emails and I conducted the interview in-person. The transcripts of the interview contributed to my understanding of the current and evolving tourism sector in Essex County and provided insights into the organization’s perceptions and aspirations for agritourism. I contacted two additional organizations but interview solicitation was ultimately unsuccessful.

### 3.2.2. Farm & Winery Level

To better understand how and why farmers and winery owners turned to agritourism activities in Essex County, I conducted semi-structured interviews with current and transitioning agritourism providers. I used these interviews to gain farm and winery level information by active and future practitioners because they were most capable of providing relevant and in-depth opinions and insights as per the needs of the research. The interviews took place on the farm or winery, which provided an additional setting for engagement and interaction with the interview participant. These data were used to inform and develop an on-the-ground understanding of agritourism within Essex County.

#### 3.2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method for objective two. I chose this method because it allowed participants to expand on their lived experiences and perceptions of agritourism provision, which developed my understanding of agritourism at the farm and winery levels (Clifford et al., 2010; Castree et al., 2013). I interviewed current and in-development wineries and farms that included some aspect of on-enterprise visitation because this best reflected the current status of agritourism within the County. I interviewed farm and winery owners and managers exclusively because of their unique ability to provide in-depth insight into the motivations, objectives, and evolution of their enterprise, which was most pertinent for my research. To determine the number of interviews conducted, I first defined the
population for the research purposes, which is detailed below, and aimed to continue interviewing until saturation or until the population was expended.

With agritourism farms, I defined my population to reflect both the breadth of activities that could be included under my guiding definition of agritourism and the variety of agricultural offerings within the County (e.g. honey, fruit, vegetables, and beef). I decided on this definition because it best represented the entirety of agritourism farms in Essex County. Following Che’s guiding definition of agritourism (2005), the included farms needed to be in active production and offer agritourism activities on the farm. For the purpose of the study and as a result of a preliminary exploratory search, this included farms with on-farm markets, pick-your-owns, on-farm entertainment, tours, petting zoos, and/or hosted on-farm special events. While this definition yielded an estimated population of 17 farms, the actual number of agritourism farms within the County is unknown due to identification issues detailed later in the chapter.

Within this population, I first used purposeful sampling to ensure a wide variety of activities and agricultural types were showcased within the sample. I found farms through online directories found during preliminary research (Table 3.2). This may have presented a bias in the data due to the challenge of relying on accurate and up-to-date information from online sources. However, I expected farms that were actively participating within the sector would have contact information readily available due to the nature of their enterprise. I expanded the sampling base using snowball sampling through interview participant suggestions to supplement web listings (Neuman, 2014; Clifford & Valentine, 2010). I recruited participants on-site and through cold calling (Clifford & Valentine, 2010; Bickman & Rog, 1998). In total, I interviewed eight farmers and contacted an additional five who declined the interview. I did not contact the remainder of the population due to unforeseen methodological issues, which are detailed later in the chapter.

The farm sample obtained broadly represented the various iterations of agritourism known throughout the County. All of the eight sampled farms had an on-farm market and other agritourism activities included: U-Picks for apples and berries (3), on-farm special events (2), and ‘agritainment’, which includes family-oriented activities like corn mazes, wagon rides, playground equipment, or pumpkin bowling (3). The three agritainment operations were the largest of the enterprises with large dedicated spaces for parking and claims of drawing thousands of visitors per season but the rest of the sample was made up of relatively small
agritourism enterprises. However, this may not be reflective of the size of their agricultural enterprise as a whole. In addition to agritourism, of the eight farms sampled, many were engaged in other on and off-farm agricultural activities including: participation in farmers’ markets (4); corn, soy, or wheat cultivation (3); small scale egg or beef sales (3); and fruit wholesaling to packers (1). All but one of the sampled farms diversified partially or wholly into agritourism from a more conventional, production-oriented family farm in Essex County and had a family background in agriculture. The single farm that did not diversify was purchased by a family seeking a change in careers and living arrangements and when they became agricultural producers they simultaneously opened an agritourism operation.

Table 3.2. Online directories used in farm identification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directory Name</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OntarioFarmFresh.com</td>
<td>Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WindsorEats.com</td>
<td>Windsor Eats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HarvestOntario.com</td>
<td>Harvest Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy Local Map – 4th Edition</td>
<td>Essex County Federation of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VisitWindsorEssex.com</td>
<td>Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to the farm population, I also defined the winery population to represent the breadth of tourism-dependent operations within the County. I included relatively new and in-development grape and fruit estate wineries with opening dates, or anticipated opening dates, between 2006 and 2017. I also limited my population to small and medium sized wineries, with production under 10,000 cases/year (Withers, 2013). I decided on this definition because it best reflected the emerging wine sector and the period of growth from 2006 to present (Withers, 2013), and were most likely to have a better connection with and dependency on tourism marketing and visitation (Holland et al., 2014). I excluded wineries that offered additional agritourism related activities on-site (e.g. U-Picks) from the above criteria because they offered a unique and valuable perception of agritourism within the County. This definition yielded an estimated population of ten wineries.
Within this definition, I first used purposeful sampling to ensure the breadth of the wine sector would be represented within the sample. This included both fruit and grape wineries, members and non-members of the local winegrowers association (Essex Pelee Island Coast), and locations on and off of Country Road 50. Wineries were selected via online directories identified during preliminary research (Table 3.3). To capture wineries in the process of opening, I used snowball sampling through initial interview participants (Neuman, 2014). I recruited participants on-site and through cold calling (Clifford & Valentine, 2010; Bickman & Rog, 1998). In total, I interviewed seven winery owners, at which point I reached saturation.

Table 3.3. Online directories used in winery identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directory Name</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VQA Ontario – Lake Erie North Shore Appellation of Origin</td>
<td>Vintners Quality Alliance - Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essex Pelee Island Coast Wine Route – 2015/2016</td>
<td>Essex Pelee Island Coast &amp; Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VisitWindsorEssex.com</td>
<td>Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy Local Map – 4th Edition</td>
<td>Essex County Federation of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample of estate wineries obtained covered a broad variety of small operations present within Essex County. Of the seven wineries sampled, grape wines represented the majority of production (5) but two of the enterprises exclusively sold other fruit wines. The wineries’ ages are fairly spread throughout the 2006-2016 time frame and one of the wineries had an anticipated opening date during 2017. The sampled wineries were also fairly spread out, representing wineries on (3) and off (4) of County Road 50. Having a spatially diverse sample is more significant for wineries than agritourism farms because County Road 50 is the main wine route within the County and many of the promotional materials direct visitors towards the area. Of the wineries sampled, only the two fruit wineries were a result of agricultural diversification on family farms. The remainder of the wineries were started as a result of lifestyle or career changes from non-agricultural work.
I used a pre-determined interview protocol during interviews with farm and winery agritourism operators (see Appendix A). I constructed interview questions around four general themes, detailed below. I chose these themes to reflect emergent themes within the background document review, address gaps noted within the literature, and contribute to my research aim more generally. The first theme explored the nature of the agritourism enterprise and what services they provided. This informed my understanding of the perceived function of the enterprise and its objectives, which further contextualized the data. The second theme explored the practitioners’ motivations behind diversifying into agritourism provision or opening an agritourism enterprise and their perceptions of the future of the sector. These data helped to provide me with a more nuanced understanding of the various motivations behind agricultural diversification into agritourism and the pathways into agritourism enterprise ownership. The third theme examined the process of diversification. This line of inquiry furthered my understanding of the challenges and resources used throughout the process, and the resultant impacts and changes as a result diversification. The fourth, and final, theme addressed perceptions of the impact of the tourism industry and contemporary culinary trends on the agritourism enterprise. This allowed me to better understand how agritourism providers positioned themselves within the tourism and/or culinary sectors and to determine the perceived sector overlap.

3.3. Methodological Issues

At the organizational level of research, the main issue I encountered was a lack of access to promotional organizations within Essex County. Despite my repeated attempts to contact organizations involved in agritourism promotion that were identified through the document review by cold calling and email contact, only one organization responded positively. While this is not necessarily a methodological issue, this lack of access did impact the size of my sample and the resultant representation and contextualization of marketing and branding materials. In the future, greater effort should be dedicated to finding a gatekeeper or leveraging networks and contacts more fully to increase receptivity and access to County level organizations. The present research may be a fruitful access point into subsequent academic exploration within the County.

At the farm and winery levels of research, my sample size was smaller than originally anticipated due to some unforeseen methodological issues. First, during the agritourism farm
sampling process, I overlooked some potential participants that met the sampling criteria. This issue stemmed from my dependence on up-to-date, reliable, and navigable online directories. In practice, the online directories I used contained unreliable information (e.g. out of date or false) and were difficult to navigate because of inconsistent and complicated search functions. Second, the seasonality of agritourism and other on-farm agricultural activities may have contributed to the number of declined interviews I received. In future field seasons it may be necessary to schedule additional research trips, to target pre- and post-growing season periods as well as trips during production. This would offer participants multiple opportunities to engage with the researcher and would help to navigate the various peak seasons associated with the often four or more crop types grown on agritourism farms. Overall, I anticipate that these issues had a minimal impact on my research as whole because the results were reflective of trends found within the literature but, admittedly, the sample size was smaller than anticipated or desired.
CHAPTER FOUR – MANUSCRIPT

TITLE: The Representations & Realities of Agritourism in Essex County, Ontario

INTRODUCTION

While change is an ongoing process within rural spaces, rural regions within the Global North have been experiencing particularly rapid and transformative change over the past several decades (Garrod, Wornell, & Youell, 2006; Ilbery & Bowler, 1998). The causes of change are multiple, commonly involving a combination of broad sectoral shifts away from primary sectors towards the knowledge and service sectors, increasingly neoliberal government policy, changing rural actors and sociopolitical dynamics, and globalization more broadly (Woods, 2005; Woods, 2007). Though change is experienced unevenly, resulting in multifunctional regions exhibiting a plurality of combined production, consumption, and protection uses of the countryside (Holmes, 2006), they have largely resulted in a diminishing dependency on primary sectors within these spaces as new uses emerge (Argent, Smailes, & Griffin, 2007; Ramsey, 2009). Bottom up and top down efforts respond to and amplify these changes as various actors take measures to capitalize on and adapt to these new uses (Woods, 2007) while simultaneously working to remain viable and competitive within an evolving economic landscape (Smithers, 2005).

In many agricultural regions, rural change is intimately tied to agricultural restructuring. In Ontario, Canada, the agricultural sector continues to be dominated by productivist mentalities, in which highly specialized and mechanized farms are increasing in size while the overall number of farm holdings is decreasing (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998; Smithers & Johnson, 2004). Though so-called ‘productivist’ agriculture allegedly benefits farms by increasing financial returns (Smithers & Johnson, 2004), it has also led to a growth in farmer debt, a decline in agricultural employment, greater vulnerability to market and climate fluctuations, and a distancing between community and farm (Smithers, 2005; Smithers, Joseph, & Armstrong, 2005; Woods, 2005). Amidst these ongoing sectoral changes, the past thirty years have also seen a decline in provincial and federal agricultural subsidies followed by a rise in environmental regulation (Huff, 1997; Woods, 2005). Within this context, many small to medium sized farms are unwilling or unable to expand and intensify agricultural production to fit within a
productivist model; instead, some farms are opting to diversify their enterprise to remain within the sector. Agricultural diversification incorporates additional activities, such as specialized crop and animal production (e.g. organic ginseng, goats, etc.), direct marketing, and tourism, into the existing agricultural enterprise and is commonly used to supplement but not replace ‘traditional’ agricultural income (Inwood & Sharp, 2012; Renting et al., 2008). Diversified farms often reintegrate with local communities, contributing to and benefiting from ongoing rural restructuring.

In most regions, rural change is also an ongoing project of the state as regional and municipal governments react to and help direct emerging uses of rural space through rural development initiatives (Woods, 2005). Contemporary rural development strategies commonly focus on locally-based, community-led change to leverage and strengthen local resources for economic, socio-cultural, and/or environmental development (Krawchenko, 2016; Shucksmith, 2010). Within this approach, rural tourism is a prevalent strategy that taps into a growing need to market local physical, social, and economic amenities for successful development (Argent et al., 2007). Culinary tourism, specifically, is a growing trend in rural development, and uses local food, cuisine, and culinary traditions as an ‘authentic’ site of local engagement (Dallen & Amos, 2013; Everett, 2012; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Schnell, 2011). As such, it helps to shape rural spaces by increasing consumption opportunities and fostering amenity development, while also appeasing a growing desire for ‘authentic’ rural experiences by tourists (Schnell, 2011; Canadian Tourism Commission, 2004). By garnering community support and taking a locally-rooted approach, ideally rural tourism is able to achieve development goals, promote sectoral longevity, and differentiate itself within an increasingly homogenous domestic and international tourism market (Cleave & Arku, 2015; Everett, 2012; Lin et al., 2011).

Agritourism effectively ties together farm diversification and rural development strategies because it uniquely lies at the interface of production and consumption uses. Defined as “the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural... operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education, or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation” (Che, 2009, p. 109), agritourism includes activities such as on-farm markets, U-picks, estate wineries, and corn mazes. As a farm diversification strategy, agritourism allows farmers to supplement agricultural income by capitalizing on the changing rural dynamic through the provision of
alternative consumption and recreation activities that are aligned with the expectations of (ex)urban actors who seek a rural idyll that is in intentional opposition to an urban lifestyle (Barbieri, Mahoney, & Butler, 2008; Hjalager, 1996; Woods, 2005). As a rural development strategy, agritourism allows farms to reconnect with the broader community, satisfy tourists’ desires for authentic experiences, and strengthen local networks by thriving off of synergistic relationships (Che et al., 2005; Flanigan et al., 2015; Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006).

While the (growing) prominence of agritourism as a policy tool for rural revitalization and agrarian preservation has been briefly documented in farm diversification studies throughout Europe, Australasia, and parts of North America (see Barbieri et al., 2016; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Sharpley & Vass, 2006), few studies have explicitly examined the role of agritourism in rural development. Since agricultural diversification and rural development are not mutually exclusive activities, particularly within increasingly multifunctional landscapes, there is a current opportunity to take a multi-pronged approach to understanding both the regional-level uses of agritourism in relation to rural development and farm-level uses of agritourism in relation to agricultural diversification. Within the context of a turn to tourism as a rural development tool, it seems likely that farm-level and regional-level uses of agritourism will interact in various ways. An examination of place branding organizations’ use of agritourism within promotional materials is a starting place to elucidate regional-level organizations’ use and perception of agritourism. More specifically, the intersection between the promotion of agritourism at the regional-level and the engagement in agritourism at the farm level could lead to cross-promotion and informal and formal networking between actors (Che et al., 2005). In turn, it is conceivable that diversifying farms may align themselves with the tourism sector and vice versa.

This paper begins to unpack the interactions between the farm and regional levels by completing an exploratory analysis of the role of agritourism as both a feature of the regional brand and a form of farm-level diversification in Essex County, Ontario. To achieve this aim, the paper is divided into four major sections. First, it will provide a brief literature review, positioning place branding as a rural development tool and agritourism as a farm diversification strategy. The results will then start at the regional level and document the role of agritourism in the Essex County brand and then move to the land-based production level (farms/wineries) to better understand the providers’ experience of agritourism, including the pathways to provision.
and key services rendered. Finally, a discussion will bring these pieces together and identify the convergences and divergences between the roles and activities of these levels and further consider the role of networks in the advancement of agritourism in Essex County.

**Fitting Farming into the Brand**

Place branding, or the projection of identity, is a critical tool for rural development in response to the growing homogeneity of place often associated with globalisation (Cleave & Arku, 2015; Mettepenningen et al., 2012). Using visual and written text, place branding constructs an attractive overarching narrative about place that speaks to and highlights tangible (e.g. physical landscape), intangible (e.g. social and cultural) and temporal (e.g. tradition and heritage) assets that are perceived as unique to the area (Cleave & Arku, 2015; Donner et al., 2016; Papadopoulos, 2004). This unique narrative is used to provide the locale a competitive advantage broadly in economic, political, and social terms (Messely et al., 2009; Papadopoulos, 2004, p. 37). Place branding can equally be projected outwards, to attract residents, tourists, and business investment (Messely et al., 2009), or inwards, to promote domestic markets, cultivate social and territorial capital, and strengthen regional identity (Papadopoulos, 2004; Vuorinen & Vos, 2013). In many ways, this inward projection of a place brand creates a bidirectional shaping and reinforcement between brand and identity as one is dependent and complementary to the other (Donner et al., 2016; Messely et al., 2009). As a result, branding can contribute to and benefit from contemporary rural development strategies, which are also reliant on the use and development of territorial resources, including socio-cultural identity and heritage, for rural development in response to modernization and growing homogeneity (van der Ploeg et al., 2000; Woods, 2011).

Successful place brand construction is reliant on social capital, place-based identity, and collaborative development. Some recent studies have noted that local stakeholder involvement in the development and evolution of place brands is integral to its success (Donner et al., 2016; Telfer & Hashimoto, 2013) because a successful place brand relies on coordinated communication and connection between brand promise and delivery (Papadopoulos, 2004; Vuorinen & Vos, 2013). This brand delivery is effectively the construction and performance of identity and marketed assets throughout the region, which is accomplished more successfully when there is support and buy-in from local residents, organizations, and businesses (Cawley,
Therefore, through this performance and ongoing construction, the place brand both reinforces and is reinforced by the creation of social capital and sense of ownership by consulted stakeholders (Donner et al., 2016). While there is a need to consult a variety of local stakeholders to be successful, this can also present a challenge since stakeholders commonly have differing perspectives of the region’s assets and identity (Vuorinen & Vos, 2013), which can lead to fragmented or contested branding (Papadopoulos, 2004).

Within many agricultural regions there are parallel processes occurring between place branding/rural development and agricultural diversification. In both cases, there is a stronger emphasis being placed on a move towards localization in response to modernization or greater homogeneity and societal needs and expectations (Messely et al., 2009; Mettepenningen et al., 2012). Both are effectively working to balance global forces with local control and reduce local enterprises’ vulnerability while increasing their resilience (Donner et al., 2016). Place branding and agricultural localization can also be complementary processes. Increasingly, rural place branding is turning to greater promotion and integration of local cuisine and food (Boyne & Hall, 2004; Mettepenningen et al., 2012), particularly due to the close connection between products and place of production (Papadopoulos, 2004). The resultant financial support of local agriculture can strengthen agrarian identities by providing greater opportunity to diversify agricultural enterprises into localized direct marketing, remain within the sector, and reconnect food provision to place and communities (Boyne & Hall, 2004). This reconnection and reinvigoration of agrarian identity strengthens the local sense of place as well as social, physical, and temporal assets in regions where agriculture has strong ties to heritage and landscape (Boyne & Hall, 2004). As a result, the simultaneous examination of place branding and agricultural diversification through agritourism allows for a more contextualized and nuanced understanding of changing regional dynamics.

The use of landscape is integral to rural place brands. Vuorinen and Vos (2013) note three uses of landscape within place brands: as a target of experience, a quiet background, and interpreted through action. Within these three uses, agricultural landscapes, specifically, can contribute to a greater visual appeal, particularly when they conform to (urban) expectations of the countryside and food production (Donner et al., 2016; Mettepenningen et al., 2012). These expectations typically conform to the rural idyll in which agricultural landscapes are well
managed, highly productive, and reminiscent of a nostalgic rural heritage that is uncorrupted by modernity (Mettepenningen et al., 2012; McClinchey & Carmichael, 2010; Woods, 2005, p. 177). Agricultural landscapes can effectively represent counter-urbanization, which is often sought after by urban actors (Hjalager, 1996; Messely et al., 2009). Garrod et al. (2006) have conceptualized the value of these landscapes in rural tourism as countryside capital. They argue that to achieve sustainable rural tourism, the countryside must be treated as capital (alongside social capital, territorial capital, etc.) and therefore be used sustainably and invested in to continue to meet tourists’ expectations and promote the longevity of the sector (Garrod et al., 2006). Farmers, in turn, are in a position to strengthen or weaken this capital depending on their agricultural practices in relation to the projected branding image (Mettepenningen et al., 2012). Engaging farmers as stakeholders in brand production can provide a tangible site of brand performance and communication, thus creating a greater sense of authenticity. However, it is questionable if this engagement and, in turn, the bidirectional support between diversifying farms and place brand managers, is fully realized in many regions.

Agritourism’s Benefits Through Diversification and Rural Development

Many agricultural enterprises are being both pushed and pulled into diversifying into agritourism provision, along with other diversification tactics such as direct marketing. Within the context of productivist mentalities and greater modernization with associated costs, alongside the increasing price of land, many enterprises are either forced to or choose to build upon existing resources to remain within the sector (Inwood & Sharp, 2012). Agritourism provides the opportunity to add value to existing infrastructure and products and open up new markets to increase sales and exposure (Renting et al., 2008). These activities are most often used to supplement ‘conventional’ agricultural production and reduce vulnerability to global market fluctuations in light of decreasing governmental subsidies (Barbieri et al., 2008; Veeck et al., 2016). At the same time, as rural areas increasingly employ tourism as an economic development tactic and with growing interest and valuation of local food, there are growing opportunities for farmers to capitalize on a desire for authentic rural experiences (Sims, 2009). Considering this context, farmers have conveyed many motivations for diversifying into agritourism.

The motivations expressed are both financial and non-financial in nature and farmers often hold both simultaneously (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). Financial motivations are often
rooted in a desire to remain economically viable, particularly for small scale farms where production, and therefore access to commodity markets, is constrained by land holding size (Busby & Rendle, 2000; Schilling et al., 2014; Veeck et al., 2016). Specific motivations include increasing income (Frater, 1983; Hjalager, 1996; Schilling et al., 2014), offsetting a falling or unreliable income from conventional agriculture (Barbieri, 2010; Nickerson et al., 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), utilizing farm resources more fully (Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), and capitalizing on market opportunities (Barbieri, 2010; Schilling et al., 2014). In the literature, non-financial motivations are variable and include: consumer education (Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004; Nickerson et al., 2001), an improved quality of life (Barbieri, 2010; Frater, 1983; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), meeting new people (Frater, 1983; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), preserving agricultural land and heritage (Nickerson et al., 2001; Veeck et al., 2016), amongst others. Notably, there is ongoing debate within the literature about the actual profitability and financial contributions of agritourism enterprises (Hjalager, 1996; Veeck et al., 2016). This may relate to Barbieri’s (2010) findings that American agritourism providers felt they had greater success in achieving non-financial goals than financial goals. In turn, this success in achieving non-financial goals may be related, on a broader level, to the regional context that the agritourism enterprise is operating within and their ability to connect with community and rural development goals.

Aside from the private benefits to diversifying farms, agritourism also has the potential to provide public benefits in relation to rural development. While the direct regional economic benefits of agritourism have been questioned (Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006; Sharpley & Vass, 2006; Veeck et al., 2016) there is evidence of socio-cultural benefits including outreach and greater public education about food and farming, which aligns with a growing societal concern and awareness of food safety (Flanigan et al., 2015). Agritourism also has potential to build on social capital as networks and collaboration provide many benefits to agritourism providers. Examples of successful networking within the literature include collaborative marketing (Che et al., 2005; Frater, 1983; Hjalager, 1996), knowledge sharing (Ainley & Kline, 2014; Che et al., 2005; Clarke, 1999), a sense of camaraderie (Ainley & Kline, 2014), and increased tourist draw through clustering (Che et al., 2005). Clustering can be particularly beneficial as it commonly yields group and individual benefits (Che et al., 2005; Lazarus, 1998). This tactic is often facilitated through a combination of vertical and cross-sectoral networking between local
institutions, agritourism providers, and complementary sectors (Che, 2009; Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006). Through these various connections, agritourism is ultimately capable of building on regional agrarian identity (Che, 2009) and strengthens the prominence of food within the regional brand.

Agritourism has the capability of satisfying farmers’ desire or need diversify their enterprise to remain within the agricultural sector as well as rural actors’ desire for ‘authentic’ experiences and reconnection to agricultural production. As such, it is an activity that is often aligned with development strategies within rural regions that are experiencing changing social and economic dynamics related to a restructuring agricultural sector. Place branding efforts provide an opportunity to identify prominent narratives that are being constructed to direct development and inform the perceptions and uses of agriculture and agritourism by target audiences. Through an examination of the intersection of farm diversification and rural development via place branding, the broader context of the uses of agritourism and influences on these uses can start to be characterized.

**STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION**

The research was conducted during the 2016 tourist season in Essex County, Ontario, Canada. Situated between Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair, Essex County is the south-western most county in Ontario, bordering Detroit, Michigan to its west (Figure 4.1). Comprised of seven large municipalities, Essex County borders the City of Windsor and the Township of Pelee Island, with whom they share many services.

Historically and contemporarily, the main economic driver in Essex County is agriculture and agribusiness, though the nature of these sectors continue to change dramatically. The southern extent of the County, which is currently favoured by field tomato growers for its suitable climate and soil conditions, was historically dominated by tobacco growers during the early to mid 20th century and coastal grape growers during the late 1800’s (Ramsey, 2009). As of 2016, there were 1630 farms in the County with over 132,000 hectares under production in total (Statistics Canada, 2016a,b). The region’s farm acreage primarily consists of oilseed and grain production but cash receipts are dominated by greenhouse vegetable production, which accounts for 8% of the County’s farms (Statistics Canada, 2016a; OMAFRA, 2014b). Over half of the
province’s area under glass or plastic is contained within Essex County and it boasts the largest concentration of greenhouses in North America, with indications of ongoing expansion (Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation [WEEDC], 2017a). Although field crops continue to be prominent within the County’s physical landscape, the region is currently seeing a decline in the demand for field tomatoes (CBC News, 2014) and a general move towards growing numbers of greenhouse complexes and greater consolidation within the County’s agricultural sector more generally (OMAFRA 2014; Jones Consulting Group Ltd., 2014). Contributing to these trends are the soaring land prices in the region and greater taxation, which are exacerbating financial pressures on family farms in the County (Hill, 2016).

Figure 4.1. Essex County, Ontario, outlined in red, borders Detroit, Michigan, and Chatham-Kent County, Ontario (adapted from Google Maps, 2017).
Tourism & The Lake Erie North Shore

Tourism is a growing industry within Essex County and Southwestern Ontario more generally. Drawing from the American states bordering Lake Ontario and Lake Erie as well as several nearby mid-sized cities within Ontario, the region has a substantial tourism base. In 2012 the region exhibited the second highest number of visitors and the fourth highest visitor spending, totally $1.3 billion, within the Province (MTC, 2012). Furthermore, Essex County itself has a long history of cottage tourism along its shorelines, particularly with American visitors, and is currently undergoing renewed efforts to market the County as a top-of-mind tourism destination regionally and internationally (Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island [TWEPI], 2017a).

One of the most leveraged assets in the County’s tourism efforts is its designation as one of three Ontario wine appellations (Lake Erie North Shore (Figure 4.2)) and its history in wine production. In total, Essex County is home to 16 grape and fruit wineries, 11 of which hold an Ontario Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) designation (VQA, 2017a). Within Ontario, VQA acts as a regulatory body for quality assurance and appellation of origin designation and compliance, with the intent to provide a competitive edge to certified wineries while providing consumers with wines that exhibit unique terroir, or characteristics indicative of a specific location, soil, climate, and topography (VQA, 2017b; VQA, n.d.). Historically, Pelee Island was home to Canada’s first commercial winery, founded in 1866, and the region was one of the most important grape production areas in Ontario, peaking in the early 1900s, falling off by WWI, and expanding again starting in the 1980s (Bell, 2016). As the prominence of Ontario wines continues to grow in domestic and international markets, with the past seven years seeing an 87% increase in VQA Ontario wine sales (VQA, 2015), it is expected that tourism and business opportunities for viticultural and agricultural producers will also grow.
RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative approach was used to explore the emergence and status of agritourism in Essex County, in relation to both farm diversification and rural development. The study consisted of two methods: a discourse analysis to examine place branding efforts in relation to agritourism and rural development in the County and interviews to understand farm-level diversification. A discourse analysis was conducted on marketing initiatives available during the 2016 tourism and agricultural season, that promoted agritourism in Essex County. The definition of agritourism used within the study followed Che’s (2009) definition, in which activities must be conducted on a working agricultural enterprise and visitor experiences are centred on participation, enjoyment, and/or education. However, marketing initiatives notably used agritourism in a broader sense to encompass local food and cuisine, beverages, and direct marketing both on and off of farms, which is reflective of the authoring organizations’ varying definitions of the term. Despite this departure from the study’s guiding definition of agritourism, these initiatives were included within the discourse analysis due to their importance in shaping the County’s brand. The analysis was used to illuminate discourses surrounding food, farming, and rurality within promotional materials that contributed to County branding efforts directed
towards both visitors and residents. Ultimately, it was used to answer the questions: how is agritourism represented at the County level? And what work does agritourism and agriculture do in the rural brand?

The discourse analysis was conducted on written and visual texts, which were inductively analysed for emergent content themes and omissions (Tonkiss, 2004; Hannam & Knox, 2005). A slight focus was placed on diction within the promotional materials because the common strategic use of words to construct visitor expectations and shape perceptions of reality (Tonkiss, 2004; Cleave & Arku, 2015). In total, six marketing initiatives were analysed that were produced singularly or in collaboration by three organizations: Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island, Essex County Federation of Agriculture, and Windsor Essex Economic Development Corporation (Table 4.1.). These initiatives were either developed for the 2016 tourist and growing season specifically or were developed previously but remained publically available and/or promoted during the 2016 season. There was a focus on web-based materials due to the prevalence of online marketing. To further supplement and contextualize the discourse analysis, a key informant interview was conducted with Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island. Their responses highlighted regional level experiences and perceptions of agritourism.

Table 4.1. Agritourism-related marketing initiatives used in the discourse analysis of 2016 materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Publication Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Collaborators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visit Windsor Essex Website</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>TWEPI¹</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 Official Visitor Guide</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>TWEPI</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover Lake Erie North Shore Wine Route</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>TWEPI</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.E. Heart Local Website</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>TWEPI</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grown Right Here. Website</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>WEEDC²</td>
<td>TWEPI, ECFA³, Essex CFDC⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUY LOCAL Map – 4th Ed.</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>ECFA</td>
<td>TWEPI, Farm &amp; Food Care Ontario</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island  
² Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corporation  
³ Essex County Federation of Agriculture  
⁴ Essex Community Futures Development Corporation
Semi-structured interviews were used to highlight farm and winery level experiences within the County. During the course of the 2016 tourism season (roughly late May through August), a total of fourteen on farm or winery semi-structured interviews were conducted. Seven interviews were conducted with current or former agritourism farm owners, six were conducted with current or in-development winery owners, and one was conducted with an agritourism farm owner who also produced and sold wine. All participants were identified through online agritourism and winery directories and snowball sampling. Agritourism farms were chosen that emphasized customer engagement and reflected both the breadth of activities and variety of agri-products available within the County. Within the agritourism farm sample, activities included on-farm markets (8), U-picks for apples and berries (3), on-farm special events (2), and ‘agritainment’, which includes family-oriented activities like corn mazes, wagon rides, playground equipment, or pumpkin bowling (3). Additionally, six of the farms engaged in additional on or off-farm agricultural activities outside of the agritourism aspect of their enterprise. Estate wineries were chosen that reflected the most recent period of sector growth, which began in 2006 (Withers, 2013), and only included small to medium sized wineries, with production under 10,000 cases/year, to best capture tourism reliant enterprises (Withers, 2013; Holland et al., 2014). Of the wineries sampled, both fruit (2) and grape (5) wineries were included with ages spread throughout the 2006 – 2016 time frame and included one winery with an anticipated start date in 2017. These wineries were located on (3) and off (4) of County Road 50, the most prominent and highly marketed driving route in the County.

The production level interviews followed three lines of inquiry to help elucidate the private and public roles of agritourism on the farm or winery. The lines of inquiry followed were: the pathways, motivations, and processes behind agritourism provision; services provided and activities conducted on the enterprise; and perceptions of the impact of tourism and culinary industries on the enterprise. Interview responses contributed to an understanding of the questions: how and why is agritourism used and conducted at the farm or winery? And how do agritourism providers perceive their role within the broader rural community and economy? Interview data and analysis were brought into conversation with the discourse analysis of promotional materials to further examine and understand the dual role of agritourism within farm diversification and rural development.
COUNTY-LEVEL RESULTS

Efforts to brand Essex County were evident for both tourism and agricultural marketing. There were three main organizations that used agriculture and agritourism as a component within the marketing initiatives, as described below.

With respect to tourism, the brand is managed and crafted primarily by Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI), the area’s destination marketing organization. Incorporated in 2010, TWEPI acts as the marketing managers for Essex County, the City of Windsor, and the Township of Pelee. Their efforts have worked to represent the City and the County equally within initiatives. This representation is largely in response to earlier iterations of the tourism organization, which County stakeholders have since communicated to TWEPI representatives was Windsor-centric.

TWEPI’s primary role is crafting a brand that highlights the unique assets of the County and thus provides a competitive edge as a tourism destination. Their efforts are projected outwards to attract visitors to the region and ultimately achieve their mission to “enhance the image and economy of the region by providing excellent tourism services” (TWEPI, 2016a, p.3). Falling under one of four focus areas, food and drink, the organization uses agritourism as an umbrella term for culinary tourism, winery tourism, and on-farm experiences. With respect to agritourism, marketing and promotion is accomplished through tasks such as: coordinating attendance at food and beverage tradeshows; developing marketing materials such as guidebooks with food and drink sections; and developing food, beverage, and agriculture focused programs. Programs, like their wine route and farmers’ market-focused ‘W.E. Heart Local’ campaign, package pre-existing experiences and offerings to appeal to tourists while also fostering relationships between existing businesses and TWEPI. However, during an interview, representatives of the organization noted several difficulties in successfully engaging with farmers, particularly in contrast with other ‘agritourism’ providers such as winery owners and restaurateurs. Amongst other barriers, including the difficulties of staying up-to-date on fast changing tourism trends, TWEPI representatives expressed a need for leadership and organizational capacity between agritourism farmers as a precursor for a successful relationship.
With respect to agriculture, the brand was crafted primarily by the Essex County Federation of Agriculture (ECFA) and the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation (WEEDC). The ECFA, the County’s agricultural member group, is comprised of and directed by the County’s farmers with the goal of improving its members’ economic wellbeing and increasing public awareness about agriculture (ECFA, 2015). The WEEDC is the area’s economic development organization tasked with retaining, expanding, and attracting business for the purposes of economic development (WEEDC, 2017b). The agritourism marketing initiatives crafted by these organizations focused on increasing domestic purchasing via farm direct marketing opportunities and were directed inwardly to local residents of Essex County and the City of Windsor. For example, the ECFA’s BUY LOCAL map is distributed to local businesses and advertised through local newspapers.

**Agriculture in the Essex County Brand**

Agritourism, including County food and beverages and farm direct marketing, was described through three themes within branding initiatives: product, place/landscape, and farmer.

**Product**

Tourism initiatives by TWEPI used agri-products descriptions to position the County as a high quality rural destination that conforms to tourists’ expectations. Within the initiatives, food and place quality is constructed using subjective and value-laden indicators, including naturalness, locality, and taste (Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000). For example, their W.E. Heart Local campaign claimed that, “our farms naturally produce dairy and raise livestock” and with “local ingredients... the freshness and flavour simply can't be beat” (TWEPI, n.d.). The emphasis on the local also emphasizes the quality of place. With the County’s “passion for all things local and authentic” (TWEPI, 2016b, p. 17), Essex County is differentiated from similar tourist destinations as authenticity is bound by place. This theme of authenticity is furthered through the prevalence of abundance descriptors. Local chefs take “advantage of our abundant agricultural bounty” (TWEPI, 2016b, p. 17) while visitors were invited to “enjoy the bountiful cornucopia of our locally-produced fruits” (TWEPI, 2017b). When used in tandem with the aforementioned product attributes, abundance evokes the rural idyll and traditional agrarian methods which yield bountiful and wholesome products, and thus aligns with common expectations of the countryside.
By meeting these visitor expectations, the authenticity of the experience and rural destination is further validated, which works to appeal to tourists’ desires for authentic travel experiences.

Compared to agri-products, wine is used less to meet expectations of the rural places and more to position the wine region as high quality. Wines are primarily described through formal recognition and variety. In their Windsor Essex Wine Route Map, visitors were invited to “sample our award-winning offerings” developed by “winemakers [who] produce a wide array of vintages, from intricately diverse palette-pleasers to artisanal-craft blends” (TWEPI, 2016c). Similarly, the website highlighted the County’s “incredible variety of award-winning and internationally acclaimed red, white, and ice wines” (TWEPI, 2017c). Promoting international acclaim and a wide variety assures visitors that the lesser known Lake Erie North Shore wine region will meet expectations of quality while still offering something unique within the broader Ontario wine landscape.

Domestically targeted initiatives by ECFA and WEEDC, used agri-product descriptions to assert the superiority of domestic products. The language used placed domestic products in opposition to products that are produced by a globalized food system while simultaneously evoking quality and appealing to growing societal concerns about human and environmental health (Bloom, 2012; Winter, 2003). For example, the BUY LOCAL Map asserted that “produce eaten soon after harvest retains its nutrients and just tastes better” (ECFA, 2016) and the Grown Right Here website claimed that “fresh food often contains fewer preservatives (essential for food traveling long distances), providing you with a more natural, wholesome product” (WEEDC, n.d. a). With respect to environmental health, the BUY LOCAL Map informed readers that “local produce promotes a cleaner environment by reducing fossil fuel consumption and reducing greenhouse emissions” (ECFA, 2016) because of the shorter distance to market. Local products are positioned as the better choice for consumers because of their place-of-origin; the other descriptors are supplemental to and validate the superiority of local products. This approach works to appeal to local agrarian identities and further support the legacy of Essex County as an agricultural center while promoting greater domestic purchasing from Essex County’s farmers and businesses.
Place & Landscape

In tourism initiatives, agrarian landscapes are positioned as a ‘quiet background’ and are used to build upon a counter-urban narrative and further tie place to food production by highlighting productive land as a physical asset (Donner et al., 2016; Vuorinen & Vos, 2013). The productive capability of the countryside is the primary attribute of rural spaces. For example, the Official Visitor Guide informed readers that in Essex County, “the biological diversity and vast mosaic of natural areas... and lush farmlands, make this area one of the most agriculturally productive regions in the Country” (TWEPI, 2016b, p.17), while the W.E. Heart Local campaign highlighted that “[Essex County is] home to one of the most diverse and productive agricultural areas in Canada” (TWEPI, 2016b, p. 15). Furthermore, imagery within the marketing initiatives, including images which appeared to be taken in farmers’ markets or on-farm markets, commonly employed wooden motifs and handmade signage (Figure 4.3). These images complemented the written text by characterizing agrarian places as not only productive, natural, and lush but also rustic and simplistic in design. This characterization further evokes the rural idyll and satisfies an agrarian nostalgia common amongst tourists and those removed from the farmscape (Che, 2009; Hjalager, 1996) while, again, meeting consumer expectations for an authentic countryside.

TWEPI’s depiction of viticultural landscapes and wineries exhibited differentiated marketing when compared to agricultural landscapes. Rather than act as quiet backgrounds, wine landscapes are to be interpreted through action (Vuorinen & Vos, 2013) and add to the experience of wine tastings and, as a result, appeal to tourists’ desire for experiential tourism (CTC, 2004). For example, the Wine Route Map invited visitors to “let your senses guide you along our Lake Erie North Shore” and to “breathe in and taste the richly fragrant vineyards; marvel at the quaint waterfront villages and towns; and experience the heritage behind the harvest,” while the cover image showed a visitor interacting with a vineyard (TWEPI, 2016c; Figure 4.4a). Wine marketing also draws on the tangible assets of the waterfront village’s architectural character and the temporal assets of the region’s history in wine growing and production (Donner et al., 2016). Visitors are invited to escape into an authentic counter-urban experience, which is further exemplified by the Wine Route Maps’ use of a treasure map archetype (Figure 4.4b). As an active experience that evoked place and heritage, wine tourism
was firmly rooted in Essex County which further differentiated the wine region within the broader Ontario winery landscape.

Figure 4.3. Captured from the Visitor WindsorEssex website (TWEPI, 2017b), the top image depicts a scene from an on-farm market, with handwritten signage and agri-products on display atop a wooden table. The handwritten sign uses similar adjectives as the marketing initiative. The bottom pictures shows the logo and header of the W.E. Heart Local website (TWEPI, n.d.), also following a wooden motif and further using rustic themes of metal stamping and wood branding/burning alongside the same adjectives of ‘fresh and local’.

Compared to the tourism initiatives, the ECFA and WEEDC’s agricultural initiatives rarely described agricultural or viticultural landscapes and placed greater emphasis on rural community and the countryside as a lived place. For example, the Grown Right Here website claimed that, “when you buy from local farmers and producers, you are supporting local businesses and providing income for families in your community” (WEEDC, n.d. a) and the BUY LOCAL Map positioned the farm as a business and household – “we live on our farms, raise our families and depend on our farms to grow our products” (ECFA, 2016). However, the initiatives still used the subtext of the rural idyll through background images of rough, wooden-
styled tables and a stylized agrarian scene (Figure 4.5a,b) and by claiming that “by visiting local farmers markets and farm stands... you can experience the countryside and the simple pleasures it has to offer” (WEEDC, n.d. a). This use of idyllic imagery may contribute to entrenching local agriculture into the County’s identity through the subtext of an agrarian heritage, particularly for those who are removed from the farmscape. By positioning agrarian places not only as idyllic sites of production but also active pieces of the community, the initiatives also link agriculture to rural and community economic health and civic identity.

Figure 4.4. a. A visitor is shown holding a cluster of grapes amongst grape vines on the front of the 2016 Wine Route Map (TWEPI, 2016c).

b. The northwest section of the Wine Route Map showing various thematic elements of a stylized ‘treasure map’ including a large X indicating the location of Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island office space, yellowing parchment style colour palette, and antiqued compass (TWEPI, 2016c).
The Farmer

The presence of agricultural producers was notably absent from both visual and written imagery produced by Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island. While chefs were commonly mentioned within promotional text or featured in promotional images, both agricultural and viticultural producers were missing from the imagery. Instead, text focused on the productive qualities of the land, as mentioned above, or the role of the visitor. For example, the W.E. Heart Local campaign claimed that “the fresh harvest is yours for the picking” (TWEPI, n.d.). This erasure is consistent with previous themes that promote the experiential nature of the destination and contributes to a promoted sense of escape into the rural idyll.

Within the domestically targeted agricultural initiatives, farmers and producers were a prominent theme in visual and written texts. Positioning farmers as experts, families, and economically vulnerable helps to humanize the agricultural sector and put a face to production. This works to counter globalized food production by entrenching agriculture into local communities and identities and, as a result, work towards a resilient agricultural sector. In both initiatives, local farmers are positioned as experts who can assuage concerns about
environmental and human health. For instance, “food safety is important and farmers take pride in producing high quality, safe food for their customers” (ECFA, 2016) and “one of the biggest benefits to buying food locally is having someone to answer your questions about how it was grown and raised” (WEEDC, n.d. a). The BUY LOCAL Map also added that “farmers are stewards of the land…. [and] understand more than most the importance of healthy soil, clean water and air” (ECFA, 2016). The initiatives work to combat perceptions of a distancing agrifood sector by emphasizing that “farming is still a family business” regardless of corporate structure (ECFA, 2016) and including various photos of producers in agricultural settings, including a picture of a farmer and child under the heading “Why Buy Local?” (Figure 4.6; WEEDC, n.d., b). The vulnerability of farmers was used in conjunction with humanizing language. The BUY LOCAL Map asserted that by supporting local farmers “you are helping to keep agriculture viable” (ECFA, 2016) and the Grown Right Here website stated that, “in a time when many farmers and businesses are struggling to maintain their livelihood, we can do our part to support them while preserving our rural heritage” (WEEDC, n.d. a). This further associates farmers’ economic success with rural and community economic health and longevity while simultaneously suggesting a threat to Essex County’s agricultural legacy. Consumers are positioned as potential ‘saviours’ of rural and agrarian identity through their patronage and support of local farmers and businesses, thus promoting local support for the brand.

**Summary of Discourses**

Although all three organizations have the goal of promoting economic and/or regional growth, their approaches and target audiences differ. As a result, the narratives constructed about Essex County also differ.
TWEPI projected the place brand outwards to attract visitors to the area. Following commonplace branding and rural tourism trends, TWEPI used food, agriculture, and wine to provide a competitive edge to the destination by conveying a unique sense of place that is experiential in nature (Cleave & Arku, 2015; Everett, 2012; Lin et al., 2011). They accomplished this by constructing a counter-urban narrative and by providing visitors the opportunity to escape and experience a rural lifestyle. With respect to agriculture, they presented the countryside landscape as a ‘quiet background’ and used it to conform to expectations of the rural idyll by highlighting specific physical assets, including its productive qualities. They also used agriculture to tie food to place, which strengthened the idyllic countryside narrative and further asserted authenticity and quality within the agrarian landscape of the County. On the other hand, they presented wine within an experiential landscape that should be interpreted through action. In TWEPI’s branding, the active physicality of the wine landscape worked to showcase the area’s experiences and was used in tandem with highlighted temporal and cultural assets that rooted the experience in heritage and place. These assets were crucial in differentiating the region within the context of Ontario’s broader wine tourism sector.

The ECFA and WEEDC projected the place brand inwards to promote domestic spending on agri-products, which is a marketing tactic commonly employed within Ontario’s agri-food sector (Telfer & Hashimoto, 2013). The initiatives focused on showcasing the superiority of domestic products by reconnecting agricultural production to place and community as a counter to the globalized food system (Woods, 2007). Farm direct marketing became an alternative narrative to the many growing concerns around conventional agricultural production, including corporatization and safety (Telfer & Hashimoto, 2013; Winter, 2003). Through the focus on social and cultural assets and the active participation of the consumer, the initiatives built on social capital and promoted a sense of ownership within the communities to reinforce the prominence of agrarian identities (Messely et al., 2009; Ray, 1999). Ultimately, this tactic worked to build on local economic and social resources, introduced an element of local control, and improved economic resilience to global forces within the agricultural sector, thus promoting the longevity of the community.
FARM-LEVEL RESULTS

Moving to the farm-level, agritourism is used primarily as method of diversification, precipitated by diverse motives and achieved through varying pathways. Participants noted a number of different private and public benefits of agritourism, though horizontal and vertical networks were limited in use.

Agritourism Farm Pathways & Motivations

Participants noted a variety of pathways and motivations for diversifying into agritourism and commonly cited more than one rationale. Consistent with extant literature (see Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Barbieri, 2010), these pathways can be divided into two broad categories: financial motivations and lifestyle motivations.

The most commonly cited motivations were financial in nature. Issues stemming from conventional or productivist agriculture were central to most of these motivations, including low and fluctuating commodity prices, high land prices creating barriers to intensification, and weather damage resulting in unsalable goods. As one participant noted about the conditions which led to diversification: “the commodity prices were terrible... and the competition for land was very high.” He went on to validate his choice by saying that “[now] we’re price makers, not price takers,” indicating a degree of autonomy otherwise absent from wholesaling relationships. Half of the farmers also noted opportunistic diversification resulting from, for example, a noted gap in the market. Ultimately, for most participants, diversification primarily stemmed from a desire to remain economically viable and increase farm revenue, which supports the findings of other studies (see Schilling et al., 2014; Frater, 1983; Hjalager, 1996).

Consistent with other studies, most farmers also noted additional lifestyle-oriented motivations for diversification (Barbieri, 2010; Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). Some participants saw diversification into agritourism as a lifestyle change, necessitated by, for example, retirement or the demands of family life. One farmer noted, “at first we were both working off the farm... [but] after our third child was born... we decided that [my husband] would stay home and farm.” Many participants also noted the importance of familial encouragement in the ultimate decision to continue a diversified enterprise, supporting the current understanding of the interconnection between household and enterprise on family farms.
(Hansson et al., 2013; Moran, Blunden, & Greenwood, 1993). For example, one farmer commented, “I think the kids kind of talked us into [selling pumpkins and providing family activities]... and our interest was there.”

Importantly, each farmer noted a unique pathway with multiple motivations which led to their current diversified enterprise. Their original decisions to pursue agritourism were rarely pre-meditated but rather were context dependent and reflective of their enterprises’ existing resources and position within their ‘lifecycles’ (Kyungmi & McGehee, 2004; Moran et al., 1993; Nickerson et al., 2001). For example, one farmer was troubled by low commodity prices but did not diversify until a crop became unsalable due to weather damage. Their enterprise developed from the existing resources as an apple orchard to become a U-Pick that eventually broadened into other services including farmers’ market sales and an on-farm petting zoo due to initial success. This pathway, similar to the other participants’ pathways, grew out of compounding pressures from conventional, productivist agriculture and enterprise-specific context. This context continues to influence the enterprises’ operation and success as many participants combine multiple activities including raising and selling beef, farmers’ market sales, and cash cropping in addition to their agritourism ventures. Overall, this has resulted in a heterogeneous group of multi-faceted enterprises with differing goals and motivations that are reflective of their personal circumstances.

**The Roles & Services of the Agritourism Farm**

In addition to the private benefits accrued on the farm, participants expressed a number of public benefits and key roles and services that extend beyond the individual enterprise. All of the participants noted that their customers primarily originate from Windsor or peri-urban municipalities within Essex County, which is reflective of findings in other agritourism studies (Che, 2009; Hjalager, 1996). Additionally, many participants perceived themselves as integrated into the community through their on- and off-farm activities, including volunteerism, off-farm work, and community events. This integration may be partly due to the family farm’s simultaneous role as a household and a lifestyle congruent with diversified agricultural enterprises (Smithers et al., 2004). These community linkages, in tandem with a primarily urban consumer, are reflected within the three main roles identified by participants.
The first role identified by participants was that of an educator. The participants commonly felt that an understanding of agriculture, food production, and ‘conventional’ methods in particular was diminishing over time as fewer people engaged with agricultural production. While some participants formalized this role by offering on-farm tours to children and post-secondary students, most primarily performed this role informally via on-farm interactions with visitors. During these exchanges, participants acted as experts and were able to address concerns about food safety, environmental health, and animal welfare and provide an alternative to what they perceived as misinformation. As one participant noted, “I think a lot of problems with the organics, the GMO, all that, is lack of information.” These moments of engagement, education, and the opportunity to answer questions and to “see what the big issues are and to... straighten things out” were seen as benefits to many farmers who often felt they had a duty to provide more accurate information to consumers. These findings are also representative of broader trends in North American agritourism. In one study conducted in the United States, agritourism consumers and the broader public identified education and awareness as one of the defining themes associated with agritourism farms (Barbieri et al., 2016).

Agritourism farms also fill the role of providing safe, local food. Most participants noted the importance of providing safe and trustworthy alternatives to imported food, particularly amidst growing concerns about food-borne illnesses. In large part, this sense of safety and trust originates from the relationships built between producer and consumer through on-farm interactions that are often related to educational exchanges. One participant noted that his customers felt safe purchasing his products because, “we live here too. This is what we eat too. It makes it a little more trustworthy,” while another expressed that, “they know us, they know that we’re doing the best that we can.” In conjunction with the education/expert role played, it seems that having a connection to the consumer and the community helps to alleviate concerns regarding food safety, in particular.

Finally, all of the participants noted that agritourism farms can fulfill the role of rural or agrarian experience and reconnection. This role is aligned with consumer trends towards experiential tourism and is likely reflective of the (sub)urban demographic attracted to the farm in search of counter-urban spaces (Frater, 1983; Hjalager, 1996). Reconnection and experience can occur through active engagements with the agricultural surroundings, including planned
activities (e.g. U-Picks) and incidental activities (e.g. on-farm markets with free run chickens). The appeal of these engagements was often couched within a counter-urban or nostalgic narrative. As one participated noted, “they come out here and the cows are at the fence and they’ll eat apples right out of their hands... it’s just stuff they won’t see anywhere [else],” while another explained, “there are people that said, ‘oh yeah, I used to go with my parents picking strawberries’ and they’re here with their grandchild. Trying to get that connection back.” Other studies have noted that the outdoor experience and family connection holds particularly strong allure for these activities (Che, 2009; Veeck et al., 2016). This reconnection and experience can also be more passive in nature. Several participants indicated that their customers desired an escape from an urban setting and to disconnect from electronics, breathe fresh air, appreciate their surroundings, and experience greater simplicity. This experience and desire was attributed to many customers deciding to visit the farm as opposed to local farmers markets or urban farm stands, suggesting the value of on-farm experiences exceeds that of simply providing food and that the roles of agritourism are multiple and entwined. The agritourism farm can be a site of relaxation and observation, where the surroundings are as much of the experience as the physical product (Barbieri et al., 2016; Flanigan et al., 2015; Garrod et al., 2006).

At the root of these three roles is an active engagement with a farmer. Farmers have firsthand knowledge of the products they grow and the services they provide. Therefore, they are uniquely positioned to serve as an expert, provide education, foster trusting relationships, and offer agricultural experiences that feel authentic to farm and rural life. This builds a sense of place, as an agrarian identity is actively performed through the lived realities of agritourism farmers, thus meeting growing expectations of authentic experiences and further connecting food to place (CTC, 2004; Everett & Slocum, 2013). In a place where agriculture is inextricably tied to heritage and identity, agritourism farms provide opportunities to reconnect with this heritage and identity, while creating new traditions and memories rooted in the rural spaces that dominate the County’s landscape.

**Horizontal and Vertical Networks Amongst Agritourism Farms**

Several studies have noted the benefits of horizontal and vertical networks within the tourism sector. Horizontal networks, or those that span across an industry and typically involve a group of related amenity providers (e.g. agritourism farms), may be informal or formal in nature
and typically create efficiencies within a sector (Che et al., 2005). These efficiencies may be accomplished through, for example, knowledge or cost sharing, marketing consortia, or purchasing linkages (Che et al., 2005; Clarke, 1999; Ainley & Kline, 2014). Vertical networks, or those that connect providers with broader organizations (e.g. marketing or development organizations), can help to leverage limited resources more effectively. For example, the Farm Holiday Bureau for United Kingdom farmstays uses vertical networks alongside horizontal networks to connect with broader regional and tourism development organizations and national and international tourism marketing organizations to increase their collective reach and appeal for domestic and foreign visitors (Clarke, 1999).

Despite the noted benefits to networking within the literature, there is no evidence of horizontal networking amongst participants in Essex County. Indeed, none of the farms indicated interest or a strong knowledge of the County’s other agritourism opportunities. Echoing the findings of Hjalager (1996), the connections surrounding the agritourism aspect of the enterprise are much weaker when compared to pre-existing networks between farmers in an agricultural context. However, networks surrounding agritourism are not entirely absent. Instead, individual enterprises engaged in networking in different ways that extend beyond the County or beyond the agritourism industry. For example, several participants attended agricultural expositions with agritourism workshops or used agritourism member groups (e.g. the North American Direct Farm Marketing Association (NADFMA)) and related educational outings. They were able to build relationships that benefited their enterprise through these broader networks that extended beyond the County and received benefits including knowledge sharing and a sense of camaraderie. At the local level, one participant worked with nearby family-oriented destinations (e.g. mini golf) to share marketing costs and increase exposure to their target demographic. These smaller and more individualized networks allowed the participants the flexibility needed to balance their various on-farm duties with agritourism development, particularly since agritourism was only one of many aspects of the farm for most participants and the enterprises were spread out within the County, with varying seasonality.

There also appeared to be a lack of vertical networking by participants as well, particularly with respect to tourism. Despite the centrality of visitation to the success of agritourism farms, the majority of participants were disinterested in the tourism industry and had
no relationship with Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island. This disinterest stemmed from their perceptions of tourism within the County. More specifically, they felt that their services did not fall under the tourism umbrella because they did not attract out-of-County visitors. Several also expressed that the seasonal nature of their enterprise and focus on agricultural and family experiences precluded them from the winery-focused tactics employed by TWEPI. Notably, two participants did have ongoing relationships with the organization, which stemmed from strong connections to the local food scene and peripheral connections to the tourism industry. These relationships resulted in participation in the County’s food strategy, greater involvement in the tourism sector, and the development of new on-farm activities.

WINERY-LEVEL RESULTS

Turning to the winery level, trends change substantially when considering pathways to winery ownership, the perceived role of and services offered by estate wineries, and the role of industry networks and tourism.

Estate Winery Pathways and Motivations

When compared to the agritourism farms, the decision to open an estate winery was more of a pre-meditated decision directed by lifestyle-oriented motivations. Central to these motivations was a desire for change and the opportunity to live and work differently. For many, this stemmed from retirement or desired change from non-agricultural careers; participants included former lawyers, engineers, and carpenters. One participant, who had recently left a career path as a financial consultant, explained that it was a “third act of a life, [and I] wanted to do something quite different. This is different.” Another participant was motivated by a desired rural lifestyle. They explained that “we were in a 27th floor apartment and we said... ‘this is not how we want to live our life.’” Although a minority, two participants were also motivated by a personal and professional history in wine making. Change, in this respect, comes in the form of personal development and reconnection. For example, a first generation Italian immigrant used winery ownership to reclaim his Italian roots because he “always made wine, he always loved vineyards. Ever since he was a little boy in Italy.” All of the winery owners also shared the common motivation to start a winery specifically because they enjoyed making and/or drinking wine and had the financial means or opportunity to do so.
Four participants also clearly expressed financial motivations that worked alongside the lifestyle motivations. All of these participants were in possession of agricultural land when they made the decision to start an estate winery. For two participants, opening a winery was an opportunity to offset fluctuating and unreliable fruit prices, which is similar to the experience of many agritourism farms. For the remaining two, an estate winery was an opportunity to add value to and preserve agricultural land, a common trend amongst diversifying enterprises (Nickerson et al., 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). After inheriting land near a prominent wine route in the County, one participant explained that “I want[ed] to keep [the land] in the family and 100 acres is nothing for cash crops but about that point the wineries were getting going so after a lot of research we started planting.”

Of course, lifestyle-oriented motivations are not necessarily devoid of overlap with financial motivations amongst winery owners. Winery ownership is high investment but has a high return on investment potential so it is conceivable that amongst lifestyle motivations, the potential for financial return also influenced decision-making for some, if not all, participants. With that said, for all but one of the participants, the decision to start a winery was primarily motivated by a desire to grow, make, and sell wine and satisfy a desire for lifestyle change rather than to continue an agricultural occupation and maintain an agrarian lifestyle as was common amongst the farm-based agritourism operators. Additionally, winery owners generally did not use winery revenue to supplement other occupational income but instead entirely dedicated themselves to winery operation.

The Roles & Services of the Estate Winery

This dedication to winery operation likely resulted in the unified description of winery services provided by participants. Predominant amongst these services was the production and sale of quality goods. The majority of participant wineries did not sell their products in other retail outlets, so the winery provided an exclusive opportunity for consumers to purchase their products. Several participants further clarified that the appeal stemmed from the high quality found in the region or at the winery. In this regard, quality was expressed both as formal recognition and as a byproduct of the favourable climatic and soil conditions, which parallels language surrounding terroir and appellation (VQA Ontario, 2017a). Quality goods also
extended beyond the wine itself, as many wineries offered unique cuisine and dining options to help differentiate between wineries and establish a niche within the growing region.

The experience of visiting a winery and participating in on-winery activities including tours, tasting bars, and lounging areas was another service noted by the majority of the wineries. The experience sought by visitors and offered by wineries was explained in a number of different ways. Some participants expressed that visitors were commonly tourists from outside of Southwestern Ontario or locals from within the County who wanted a “nice outing” to fill their vacation or weekend time. Others specified that visitors appreciate that “they feel like they’re at home” and the welcoming nature of the experience. One of the participants who felt her winery offered a welcoming experience also specified that the area’s rurality and the sense of community at the winery was central to the desired experience. She noted that they were “working on... community. So, the building, the rural roots, the soil... make... the place special.” Central to this experience was visitors’ ability to relax and enjoy their surroundings.

**Horizontal and Vertical Networks Amongst Estate Wineries**

The role of networking within the Essex County wine industry and amongst winery owners was considered very important by participants. For the most part, participants held the common belief that industry development within the region and collective success were critical for individual success, particularly amongst the small, tourism oriented wineries included in the study. This reflects trends in Ontario’s other wine appellations. A study in Prince Edward County noted that 100% of winery owners indicated that collaboration was critical for regional success (Holland et al., 2014). This same trend was found in the Niagara region (Telfer & Hashimoto, 2013). As one participant stated, “to really be an attraction you need certain gravitas... you need each other to be a destination and to get comrades.” As a result of their shared dedication to personal, and therefore regional, success, most participants asserted that the industry remained collegial, despite also being competitive.

In addition to greater visitation, participants noted various benefits from their network that resulted from this collegial relationship and shared goal. Equipment and knowledge sharing were the most common benefits amongst participants, with bidirectional relationships established between small and large wineries. When describing the industry, one participant said, “it’s very
cooperative... with a lot of fun, good people that loan equipment back and forth and give you good advice and stuff like that, which makes it more of a community.” Knowledge sharing was about both business and product development. While many wine makers maintain what one participant described as a “smoke and mirrors show” with regards to particular techniques, several participants noted the help and advice of more experienced wine makers during the early years of their winery ownership to improve their product. This mentorship and consultation between experienced and new wine makers not only builds relationships but also helps to maintain a regional reputation for high quality wines. Another benefit of a strong industry network is the sense of camaraderie. Though winery owners may not be close, one participant commented that “it’s nice to have other people in the same business [and] share stories with.” These findings are reflective of the various benefits of horizontal networking noted in other agritourism studies (Che et al., 2005; Clarke, 1999; M. Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006), which ultimately work to benefit the sector as a whole.

In addition to informal networks and relationships, the area’s wine sector also has a local winegrowers association, Essex Pelee Island Coast (EPIC), which serves as the united front of the industry. Amongst other roles, including event planning, marketing development, and advocacy at the regional and provincial levels, EPIC also works with Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island. One participant, who is an active member of the association, commented that “EPIC is a big part in helping to grow the region. We work with [TWEPI] and we’re always coming up with different ways to get more people in.” He continued by explaining that this not only benefited the wineries but also developed the County’s tourism sector more broadly. Though not all participants were EPIC members, often citing the costly annual membership fee as an inhibitor, the association worked to develop the region and sector more broadly with acknowledged benefits to members and non-members alike.

The level of organization amongst the County’s wineries and the formation of a representative association contributed to a close working relationship with TWEPI. Though only a single participant noted a direct relationship with the tourism organization, several had positive comments, and all were located on TWEPI’s winery map, which required a small fee for inclusion, and on the organization’s website, which was free of charge. EPIC works alongside TWEPI to co-create marketing materials and programs, which TWEPI helps to facilitate and
administer. TWEPI also organizes trade show participation for all interested wineries, organize outreach to emergent American markets, and helps to facilitate events that extend beyond EPIC membership. When discussing the role of TWEPI, one winery owner explained:

“[TWEPI is] very tactical, they’re very strategic, they’re our partners day in and day out. They organize shows for us, they negotiate blocks of space so if we’re all going to go to the London Wine and Food Show, they get a block of space for all of the Lake Erie North Shore wineries that want to participate. They organize the booth so that we have a coordinated look that can be individualized. You know, they bring the linens, they bring the tables, they negotiate all of this stuff. That might not sound like a lot, [but] it’s huge given the number of shows you go to.”

Though a direct relationship with TWEPI was uncommon, the majority of participants felt they benefited from a shared goal of improving and marketing the winery sector in Essex County. When necessary, they were able to pool resources, collaborate, and draw on the expansive network of the tourism organization to have broader reach and develop regional infrastructure with the intent of increasing visitation and bolstering the region’s reputation as a wine destination.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Bringing these three pieces together, there are a number of convergences and divergences between the regional-level representations and on-the-ground realities of agritourism in Essex County.

The representations of agritourism used by the domestically targeted or ‘inward’ agricultural initiatives by the Essex County Federation of Agriculture and the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation are consistent with farmers’ perceptions and experiences. In particular, their inclusion of the farmer as an expert and family unit strongly reflects the roles that farm respondents saw themselves playing as educators and trusted providers of quality food. The representation of farmers as economically vulnerable also finds truth at the farm level as most agritourism providers diversified, in part, to enhance economic viability. Finally, their focus on community is also reflective of farm participants’ perceptions of their own strong connection to the community. In contrast, the representations of agritourism used by the outwardly directed tourism initiatives by Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island highlight the on-winery realities but provide a more curated representation of on-farm realities. In particular, their
representation of wineries as sites of quality wine production and sales and as a place that is experiential in nature aligns with winery owners’ perceptions of themselves. While the nature of the experience or how the quality of wine is described may not completely match the overall brand at an individual level, as a whole they are consistent with one another. On the farm side, representation and realities converge with respect to product and, in part, place. Both the tourism brand and the agritourism farm owners describe agri-products as having positive qualities that can be attributed to their locality and, in many ways, agritourism farms also fill the role of providing an idyllic counter-urban landscape that fulfills a desire for escape. However, representation and reality diverge with respect to the experiential nature of the landscape and active presence of the farmer, who has been erased from the landscape in destination branding materials. Agricultural landscapes move from ‘quiet background’ in branding materials to places of active experience and enjoyment on agritourism farms.

These convergences and divergences between representations and realities may be explained, in part, by trends found in enterprise motivations and goals at the farm and winery level, which impacted their ability and desire to network.

On the one hand, the County’s agritourism farms are largely heterogeneous. They have diverse activities and seasons that are a result of the varying pathways and motives for diversification. In many ways, each farm is individual in their goals and tactics used to accomplish these goals are reliant on the enterprises’ and households’ context. This diversity likely impacted farmers’ ability and desire to network or collaborate with other agritourism farms within the County and form a cohesive regional unit, particularly in light of their near universal indifference towards tourism and destination creation, which is one of the main benefits of clustering (Che et al., 2005; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). One potential result of this lack of intra-County sectoral networking was a diminished ability to network vertically and collaborate with place brand managers at Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island due to lack of organization. TWEPI representatives noted the need for leadership and organizational capacity for successful collaboration with agricultural enterprises and this trend is reflected in other studies (see Vuorinen & Vos, 2013; Everett & Slocum, 2013). In short, agritourism farms were largely absent from the tourism brand because they were not actively involved in brand or destination creation. One potential impact of this lack of involvement may be a sustained or
widening disconnect between County level organizations and agritourism farm owners’ perception of tourism and resultant persisting lack of communication and connection between the two. The need for strong organizational capacity is not necessary for representation in the domestic agriculture brand because the ECFA is already comprised of and directed by the County’s farmers and they work as an advocate for the sector within the County, including within the WEEDC Grown Right Here initiative. Here, farmers are the primary stakeholders in brand creation and management.

On the other hand, when compared to agritourism farms, the estate wineries are much more homogenous. Participants had very similar activities, seasons, and motives for diversification. While their backgrounds are diverse, each grape winery is wholly invested in wine growing, making, and selling, resulting in a common goal. In addition to this singularity, there are many exemplars for the region to follow to achieve relative success, resulting in fairly homogenous tactics. One result of this homogeneity and common goal is the very strong formal and informal horizontal networks present at the wine sector. Having formed a cohesive and well-organized stakeholder group increased their ability to network vertically with TWEPI and work as stakeholders in the co-creation of destination branding, which likely contributed to the more accurate portrayal in marketing initiatives.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Within Essex County, it appears that many agritourism farms do not participate in the organized tourism sector, despite potential bidirectional benefits, due to the nature of the enterprises and sector. Currently, the tourism brand benefits from its depiction of agriculture as a passive background by presenting a landscape that is aligned with visitor expectations of the countryside (Mettepenningen et al., 2012; Vuorinen & Vos, 2013; Woods, 2005), while also connecting its culinary tourism to place by showcasing where local food originates (Schnell, 2011). However, this depiction yields no direct benefits to agritourism enterprises, aside from the potential for greater incidental visitation. Yet, agriculture’s historic and contemporary prominence within Essex County means that agritourism has the potential to satisfy tourists’ desire for authentic experiential tourism (Everett & Slocum, 2013; Veeck et al., 2016) by conforming to a counter-urban and idyllic narrative while providing a tangible site of interaction with the farmscape and rural lifestyles (Che, 2009). This representation could yield greater
benefits to the agritourism enterprises through increased visitation and broader, cost-effective marketing. At present, this potential is not met within the County due to the early-stages state of the agritourism and tourism sectors. Agritourism farms’ diversity in operation and motivations, lack of networking/organization, seeming lack of abundance (as a result of diversity and lack of clustering), poor conformity to market readiness expectations (e.g. tidy appearance, strong web presence, washroom and parking facilities (SWOTC, 2011)), and general lack of interest in creating a tourism destination makes them a riskier development for the tourism organization, particularly when compared to competing agritourism assets like estate wineries.

The County’s estate wineries are much more aligned with the goals of the tourism organization and the wine sector is moving in-step with the tourism sector. The estate wineries provide a unique asset to the region, which has high market readiness (e.g. polished looking, accessible, active marketing), strong networking and organization, and demonstrated interest in creating a destination. This alignment and resultant inclusion of estate wineries as brand stakeholders has benefited both sectors. The tourism brand benefits from its accurate representation of estate wineries by minimizing the gap between brand promise and delivery and ensuring a site of brand performance, which further validates and legitimizes it (Papadopoulos, 2004). The support of local business ultimately strengthens both the brand and the sector (Lee et al., 2015). The wineries benefit from the resultant potential for increased visitation, prolific marketing facilitated by the tourism organization, and greater awareness of Essex County as a wine destination, which further leverages its position within one of Ontario’s three wine appellations. Additionally, promoting wine tourism alongside culinary tourism helps to build social and territorial capital by strengthening connections amongst tourism-aligned sectors, fostering local ownership, and providing a more cohesive tourism package (Telfer & Hashimoto, 2013). Ultimately, this can provide a competitive edge (Lin et al., 2011).

While agritourism farms are largely absent from the tourism brand, they still receive benefits from their representation within the domestic agricultural brand. The farmers’ goals are aligned with brand managers because, for most, the ultimate goal for both is the financial support of Essex County’s agricultural firms. Much like the benefits accrued by the tourism brand and wineries, the domestic brand benefits from accurately portraying farms by minimizing the gap between brand promise and delivery through the brand performance at the farm-level, further
validating and legitimizing the portrayal and increasing the initiative’s/brand’s likelihood for success. The agritourism farms benefit by having increased exposure and marketing to their target demographic (residents of Windsor and Essex County), potential for increased visitation, and greater likelihood for consumer satisfaction. At a broader level, the accurate representation and inclusion of the farm within the brand also works to reinforce an agrarian identity amongst Essex County residents by asserting the superiority of local products and fostering a sense of pride, ownership, and connection to the agricultural sector (Papadopoulos, 2004; Winter, 2003). This is accomplished by building on the County’s social, territorial, and countryside capital by reconnecting farms to community, differentiating Essex County agriculture from ‘foreign’ agricultural products, and helping to maintain a varied agrarian landscape (Garrod et al., 2006; McClinchev & Carmichael, 2010; Schnell, 2011).

It is worth noting that agritourism farms were not wholly represented by any branding and marketing initiatives within the County, though agriculture, agri-products, or direct marketing were represented. None of the brands focused on or highlighted the unique experiential nature of on-farm agritourism, which may impact future farm diversification, particularly since participant farms mostly operated independently with little regard for place branding. While difficult to gauge, this lack of representations may impact the potential for the sector to expand in the future. Looking to the estate wineries, there is a clear and well supported sector with exemplars for success but this is absent for agritourism farms. This absence may increase the perception of risk amongst farmers considering diversification (Bowler et al., 1996). Additionally, those who do consider diversifying into agritourism are potentially less likely to receive the mentorship found between newer and older wineries due to the lack of horizontal networking, which sharpens the learning curve. Overall, this has the potential to further dampen agritourism farms’ ability to increase sectoral visibility and link in with the tourism sector.

More broadly, despite the parallel processes between agricultural diversification and rural tourism, these processes do not always intersect. While this intersection has been noted in other studies (see Che et al., 2005; Clarke, 1999), resulting in bidirectional support, cross-promotion, strong networks, and a general alignment between the agritourism providers and rural tourism organizations, it does not appear to be present within Essex County. However, this does not mean that agritourism does not contribute to rural development. While both diversifying farmers
and rural tourism promoters are turning to greater localization, with a focus on building local resilience and resources, in Essex County, the overlap between the two actors is fairly minimal on the farm side. The research highlights some potential factors that impact this overlap, including: the degree of homogeneity within the sector, the use of horizontal and vertical networks within the region, common goals between brand managers and enterprises, and the presence of other (competing) regional assets. Importantly, although agritourism farms have not aligned themselves with the tourism sector and vice versa, they still contribute to rural development initiatives. The case study provided evidence that farms are actively reconnecting to communities through education and engagement and work to appease growing concerns about food production by bolstering the reputation of the local food system.

This article presents a snapshot of the intersection of tourism, agritourism enterprises, and rural development in Essex County. As the tourism brand continues to mature with the guidance of Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island and continues to carve out its niche within Ontario’s culinary and wine tourism landscape, it can be expected that this relationship will change and evolve. Considering the rapid pace of change in the tourism industry, this study may be apt to adopt a longer time span over which the bidirectional impacts of brand representation and enterprise realities can be monitored. Furthermore, while agritourism enterprises were the focus in this study, other studies have noted the potential for other agricultural enterprises to benefit from a culinary focused place brand and tourism industry (Boyne & Hall, 2004; Everett & Slocum, 2013). As such, it may be interesting to explore back linkages from a tourism focus on local gastronomy to local farms’ diversification opportunities into unique product development and resultant cropping decisions. By continuing to explore the multi-level and cross-sectoral interactions that provide the context for farm diversification, new facets of decision making processes and impacts on operations can continue to be highlighted.
CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of Context

This research has been motivated by the ongoing, rapid, and in some cases transformative changes occurring throughout rural regions of many developed economies. These changes are largely associated with broad sectoral shifts away from primary and secondary sectors, increasingly neoliberal government policy, and globalization more broadly (Garrod, Wornell, & Youell, 2006; Woods, 2005). So, too, are they connected to the re-valuation of rural areas as providers of ecological and amenity related services. In many areas, these changes result in economic, social, and physical changes to rural regions in relation to emerging and evolving uses of rural space (Woods, 2007; Holmes, 2006). Within many regions in Southwestern Ontario, these changes are, in part, a result of agricultural restructuring towards so-called ‘productivist’ agriculture, resulting in larger, more specialized and mechanized farms that are socially and economically distanced from local communities (Ilbery & Bowler, 1998; Smithers, Johnson, & Joseph, 2004; Smithers, 2005). Some small to medium sized farms who are unable or unwilling to conform to this productivist mode of agriculture are opting to diversify their enterprise to remain within the sector (Barbieri et al., 2008; Inwood & Sharp, 2012). Simultaneously, community and regional level organizations and the state are actively working to shape and direct these emerging and evolving uses of rural spaces.

Within this context, rural tourism is frequently adopted as a potential response to the changing nature of rural regions. Though often erroneously considered a panacea to the economic decline occurring within some areas (Woods, 2005, p. 173), rural tourism presents an opportunity to foster and leverage domestic resources (Cawley, 2009) and capitalize on growing interest in unique tourism experiences. Rural tourism typically markets local physical, social, and economic amenities to differentiate a region within an increasingly homogenous rural tourism market (Argent et al., 2007; Lin et al., 2011) and satisfy tourists’ desire for ‘authentic’ counter-urban experiences (CTC, 2004; McClinchey & Carmichael, 2010; Schnell, 2011). Culinary tourism is a growing trend amongst developers and tourists alike because of food and drink’s ability to be imbued with local heritage and culture and, as a result, further differentiate place (Everett, 2012; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006; Sims, 2009). Successful networking within and support from local actors is often considered a necessity in fully leveraging and capitalizing on
local amenities while simultaneously achieving development goals (Cawley, 2009; Ray, 1999; van der Ploeg et al., 2000).

Agritourism is a method of farm diversification that has the potential to work towards rural development and work in-step with rural tourism strategies. Defined as the act of inviting visitors onto a working farm or agricultural enterprise for the purposes of education, enjoyment, or active involvement (Che, 2009, p. 108; Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010), agritourism allows farmers to remain within the sector and provides additional rural amenities. In addition to a plethora of American and European studies exploring the motivations of agricultural producers (see Barbieri et al., 2008; Nickerson, Black, & McCool, 2001; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), some studies have begun to explore the ability of agritourism farms to bridge the growing divide between farm and community (Flanigan et al., 2015; Schilling et al., 2014) and their use of networks to navigate the tourism sector (Che et al., 2005; Clarke, 1999).

As described in chapter one, the research was guided by opportunities within the literature and aimed to document and understand the role of agritourism as both a feature of the regional brand and as a form of farm-level diversification in Essex County, Ontario. The study used three objectives to achieve this aim: understand how agritourism is used and promoted at the County level, understand the role of agritourism as a form of farm-level diversification, and identify the convergences and divergences between agritourism enterprises’ and regional organizations’ activities and objectives while further considering the role of networks.

Chapter three detailed the research methods used to achieve the aforementioned research aim and objectives. Chief amongst those methods was a dual approach using semi-structured interviews and a discourse analysis. During the 2016 tourism season, a total of fourteen on-farm or winery semi-structured interviews were conducted within the chosen case study area in Essex County, Ontario. The subsequent interview transcripts were then analysed using NVivo software for themes within the responses. A discourse analysis on written and visual texts within six marketing initiatives available during the 2016 season was also conducted. The texts were inductively analysed for emergent themes and omissions. The data were further contextualized using a key informant interview with Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island and review of secondary sources including strategic development and planning documents.
5.2. Summary of Findings

The resulting manuscript wove a narrative through the regional, farm, and winery levels, and highlighted key findings with respect to the research’s overall aim and objectives:

With respect to objective one, the regional level analysis noted differences between the uses of agritourism by the tourism marketing initiatives and the domestic agricultural marketing initiatives. The tourism initiatives constructed a discourse that showed the County as a unique and authentic rural escape where local food and wine are featured as the escapist experiences while the un-peopled agrarian landscape acted as a background. The domestic agricultural initiatives constructed a discourse that showed the superiority of the County’s agri-products and local farms and farmers’ foundational nature in the fabric of rural community’s identities, health, and longevity.

For objective two, the farm and winery levels showed distinct differences in the public and private roles of agritourism and how providers were engaging in agritourism activities. The farm level highlighted the mixed financial and non-financial motives for diversification amongst farmers, who had diverse enterprise pathways, goals, and tactics. Participants noted three key roles that agritourism farms played (educator, trusted food provider, rural/agrarian experience) for the typical Windsor-Essex urban or suburban customer. Aside from individual connections with customers, horizontal and vertical networks were mostly absent amongst agritourism enterprises, who were not active participants within the tourism sector. At the winery level, motivations were primarily non-financial and homogenous in nature, and winery owners had similar goals and tactics. Participants noted two key roles that estate wineries played (product sales, rural escape) to a broad variety of domestic and ‘foreign’ visitors. Both formal and informal horizontal networks were strong amongst wineries, as was their vertical networking with and participation in the tourism sector.

Finally, objective three was achieved by bringing the three levels together, which highlighted the importance of collaboration and networking in representation within branding initiatives. It indicated that the homogeneity and singularity of vision within a sector may contribute to the likelihood of successful networking. Wineries and the tourism brand benefited directly from working in-step, as did agritourism farms and the agricultural brand, though the
overlap between the two was minimal. As such, estate wineries and agritourism farms contributed to rural development in different ways: estate wineries contributed to the development of the tourism sector while agritourism farms contributed to greater connection with rural communities and strengthened the reputation of the local food system.

5.3. Scholarly & Practical Contributions

This research has several scholarly and practical contributions as detailed below.

5.3.1. Scholarly Contributions

Though the literature on agritourism providers’ motivations for diversification is prolific, the research has highlighted some novel insights. While the findings support the growing consensus that motivations in North America are primarily financial but are often held in tandem with non-financial motivations (Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007), the in-depth analysis revealed the importance of farms’ dual nature as enterprise/household in the ultimate decision to diversify. Drawing on the seminal piece by Moran (1993), the research indicated that the enterprise and households’ specific context dictated the pathways used to develop agritourism activities. This distinction is important because there are subsequent implications for the development of networks and collaboration opportunities. As Kyungmi and McGehee state: “through analysis of the motivation of farm families involved in agri-tourism... the kinds of contributions that can be made to a community by an agri-tourism business... are examined” (2004, p. 163).

In relation to the above, the research has contributed an additional case study to the exploration of the role of networks in the development and functioning of tourism and agritourism within a region. The benefits obtained by the use of informal and formal horizontal networks amongst estate wineries and vertical networks between wineries and the tourism organization echoed networking and collaboration benefits found within the agritourism, place branding, and rural tourism literature (Cawley, 2009; Donner et al., 2016; Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006). However, on the farm side, a counter narrative emerged that indicated a disinterest in networking within the region. As a result, the majority of agritourism farms did not receive the same benefits that were noted in the literature or were received by estate wineries. The research suggested that this was a result of individual and regional contexts. The heterogeneity amongst agritourism farms contributed to low involvement in the tourism sector
and branding, as the wineries presented a lower risk and more united front that aligned with tourism strategies within the County, which further distanced tourism from agritourism farms.

Finally, the research has contributed to a growing literature on the connection between rural development and agritourism by exploring the operating context of enterprises within Essex County and the various roles played by agritourism enterprises in developing local resources. Although several studies have noted agritourism’s use to rejuvenate rural economies (Barbieri et al., 2016; Hjalager, 1996; Sharpley & Vass, 2006), few have provided specific examples (see Veeck et al., 2016). Within the research, the role of estate wineries is a specific example of the use of agritourism for economic development. The major contribution of estate wineries was in the development of rural tourism through their participation in tourism branding and sectoral growth. Their collaboration with one another and with the County’s tourism organization helped to develop infrastructure and social capital, and create a tourist draw to the County’s wine route and surrounding environs. Though on-farm experiences did not feature within or contribute to the tourism brand, agritourism farms contributed to rural development in a different manner. On-farm agritourism helped to develop and preserve social, territorial, and countryside capital by maintaining farmland diversity, reconnecting agriculture to communities, and providing public education about food and farming, which has the potential to relieve public distrust of (local) food systems and has implications for rural identities (Ainley & Kline, 2014; Flanigan et al., 2015; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). The domestically targeted agricultural initiatives likely helped increase agritourism farms’ exposure to local customers.

5.3.2. Applied Contributions

In addition to the scholarly contributions of the research, there are practical insights and applications of the findings.

To the interest of brand managers, tourism developers, and practitioners, the research provided clear examples of the benefits to both horizontal and vertical networking. For practitioners, informal networks have the capability to alleviate costs associated with equipment purchases or rentals, provide valuable insights and mentorship with respect to enterprise operations or adopting new elements into the enterprise, and the informal network, as a whole, can provide general support and a sense of camaraderie. Formalized horizontal networks are
capable of providing greater organization and visibility to the industry and help facilitate networking with broader organizations at the County level and beyond. For brand managers, building relationships and networks with practitioners and diverse stakeholders is crucial for accurately representing assets within the region. This serves the dual purpose of ensuring local, ground-level support of the brand and thus adding a degree of legitimacy, as well as highlighting important regional assets that will ultimately differentiate the branded place. As the research noted, exclusion of potential stakeholders from the branding process has the potential to create additional distance and disinterest between the tourism sector and local businesses or potential assets.

In this same vein, the research noted some potential precursors for successful relationships and networks within developing or expanding rural tourism regions. By exploring the operating context of agritourism farms and estate wineries, the research highlighted the need for homogeneity in goals and tactics within a sector, a common goal or vision between brand managers and tourism enterprises, the presence of horizontal and vertical networking within the industry, and a lack of competing assets. However, the above should not be seen as a checklist for identifying low-risk or market ready assets but more so a roadmap to fully leveraging domestic resources and activities. Consultation with local stakeholders has the potential to better align the tourism sector with an industry and vice versa. For example, most agritourism farms expressed a lack of interest in ‘tourism’ because they understood the County’s tourism sector to be winery-centric and void of domestic visitors but the two participants who had relationships with the tourism organization held different perceptions of tourism.

Finally, the research suggested the need for a variety of types of networks and relationships depending on the context of the enterprise and industry. For the wine industry in Essex County, the use of informal and formalized horizontal networks alongside vertical networking with TWEPI suited the needs of the industry and fully leveraged their social capital within the context of the wine region. Though there was a general absence of networks amongst agritourism farms, this does not suggest that networking would not be valuable for these enterprises but more that the relationships and models that are presented to them are not suiting their needs and are thus not appealing. The one participant who did express a very beneficial participation within NADFMA highlights that networks can be desired and used but may operate
in different ways (e.g. primarily through social media or with a broader spatial extent). The assessment of the needs of enterprises can benefit industry growth by ensuring that the help being provided is the help that will be most valuable and used at the enterprise and industry levels.

5.4. Study Limitations & Future Research Opportunities

The primary limitation of this research was its small sample size which lacked inclusivity. While the focus on agritourism enterprises presented an opportunity to begin exploring the interactions between agricultural diversification and tourism within the study site in a clearly defined manner, ultimately the low number of agritourism farms in the County resulted in a small sample size. Theoretical saturation was not achieved amongst agricultural enterprises and their responses remained highly diverse. As a result, generalizations drawn from respondents may not accurately reflect the sector as a whole, despite efforts to find broad commonalities. Furthermore, for agritourism wineries the research was scoped to sample small estate wineries, as noted in Chapter 3, which excluded roughly half of the wineries within the County. While theoretical saturation was achieved amongst participants, these findings cannot be generalized to represent the large and strongly established wineries, which likely operate under different corporate structures. Though the intention of this exclusion was to capture tourism-dependent enterprises, there remains an opportunity to further explore corporate wineries’ dependency and impact on the tourism sector in Essex County, Ontario. Moving forward, there remains a major opportunity to further explore the interactions between agricultural diversification and tourism development in a more inclusive manner. More specifically, since findings indicated a focus on locally-produced food within tourism marketing initiatives, there is an opportunity to explore potential back-linkages, benefits, and impacts on the form and function of small to medium sized farms within Essex County (Boyne & Hall, 2004).

The research has also presented a limited snapshot of a notably quickly evolving tourism sector. In the case of Essex County, this evolution may be accelerated, since it is a relatively young tourism and winery destination that continues to grow and expand. Indeed, since the conclusion of the research, two additional wineries have opened and the Essex County Federation of Agriculture has worked alongside Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island to launch a new and expanded version of the BUY LOCAL map and W.E. Heart Local website. To fully
capture and understand the role of agritourism and networks within the tourism sector, a longer term approach may be better suited to illustrate the cause and effect relationships amongst the regional, farm, and winery levels.

Additionally, the research is limited by its focus on Essex County, which is represented by a specific context that may not represent other counties in Ontario and further afield. As noted in Chapter 4, Essex County is experiencing ongoing agricultural restructuring alongside social and economic changes more broadly. Although these processes may be reflective of rural change as a whole (Woods, 2005), the specifics are undoubtedly unique, particularly with its position within an Ontario wine appellation. To further explore the validity and broader application of the findings, there is opportunity to engage in a comparative case study in a similarly defined tourism area. In particular, the research has suggested that heterogeneity works as a barrier to successful collaboration, yet other studies have noted successful networking amongst agritourism farms and related industries (for example, see Che et al., 2005). Further exploration into the regional and enterprise contexts for successful network building has tremendous potential to contribute to the agritourism and rural tourism literature and provide practical applications to brand managers and tourism developers.

Finally, the research was largely descriptive and exploratory in nature and there remains an opportunity for a more directed investigation into the impacts of agritourism on rural development strategies and goals. The findings have indicated differentiated uses and roles between agritourism farms and estate wineries and there are indications of resultant differentiated impacts on the economic and social goals of rural development. In light of research that suggests rural development organizers commonly favour assets and businesses that contribute to economic development specifically (Krawchenko, 2016) and the divided literature regarding the actual economic contributions of agritourism enterprises (see Hjalager, 1996; Ramsey & Schaumleffel, 2006; Veeck et al., 2016), it could be fascinating to explore the contributions of the two groups to economic development goals. In particular, the exploratory research has noted a potential differentiation in job creation and local employment between the two groups that could be investigated more fully.
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide – Agritourism Providers

Background/Introduction

1. To start, can you tell me about the farm/winery?
   • What do you grow?
   • Sales outlets?
   • How long has the farm/winery been operating?
   • How big is your staff? Has this changed?
2. What did you do before the [agritourism operation]?
3. How long has your [agritourism operation] been in operation?
4. Why did you decide to invite visitors onto your farm?
   • Factors
   • Push & Pull
   • Internal & External
5. What were some things that had to change so you could offer an [agritourism operation]?
   • Internal & External
6. Do you recall any challenges when you first offered these activities?
   • How did you overcome them?
   • What resources helped you get going?
   • Remaining challenges?
7. What are some of the impacts having an [agritourism operation] has had on your farm?
   • Do you spend as much time in the fields?
   • Have you had to hire new people?
   • How do you feel about these changes?

Customers

8. Who would you say is your main customer base?
   • How does this compare to before the [agritourism operation]?
9. Why do you think people come out to visit your farm?
   • What do they get out of the experience?
10. What do you think are the most important components of a successful [agritourism operation]?
    • Is there a recipe for success?
11. What would you say is your favourite thing about having an [agritourism operation]?
    • Are there things that you dislike?
12. Do you think your [agritourism operation] will continue to grow?

Networks, Resources, and Branding

13. Have you noticed any kind of organized project or plan to develop a regional brand within Essex County?
    • Do you feel like you’re part of these efforts?
14. Are there any organizations in the County or region that support farmers who have on-farm markets?
   - Have you used these resources? Do you feel this support is enough? Is there anything you would change?
   - Is there some sort of support that isn’t available that you would find useful now or in the past?
15. Do you work or collaborate with other farms, wineries, restaurants, or festivals in the area?
   - Motivations? Benefits? Challenges?
16. Have you ever been consulted by County organizations about developing or improving agritourism or direct marketing in the area?

Agritourism and Future Trajectory

17. Would you classify your farm/winery as an agritourism farm?
   - What aspects?
18. How do you feel about the trend of increased direct marketing and agritourism?
   - Does this affect your farm?
19. What do you think the future of agriculture looks like in Essex County?
   - Do you think direct marketing and ‘buying local’ is a fad or is it here to stay?
Interview Guide – Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island

Background/Introduction

1. To start, can you state your name, your position, and the organization you work for?
2. Can you tell me about the mandate of your organization?
3. What are some of its prominent initiatives and goals?

Agritourism Context

4. First of all, how does your organization define agritourism?
   a. What is the breadth of activities or businesses that may be included?
   b. Are there agricultural or culinary activities that would not be included as agritourism?
   c. Do you think that direct marketing can be separate from agritourism?
      i. If yes: how might they be different?
5. From your perspective, how does agritourism currently fit into the tourism (or agricultural) sector in Essex County?
   a. Do you think there are particular aspects that are thriving more than others? If so, why?
   b. Do you think that this reflects a general trend of what is best suited to Essex County and is most likely to succeed?
6. Have you noticed if agritourism or direct marketing offerings have been increasing or decreasing in the past several years?
7. Has there been a change in the amount of interest in agritourism or direct marketing opportunities?

Agritourism Initiatives/Projects

8. Does your organization provide any targeted support for agritourism or direct marketing providers? (For example, through promotion, workshops, or networking)
9. Do any of your initiatives or projects involve agritourism or direct marketing/local food?

If yes:

10. Can you tell me more about these initiatives?
11. Do you communicate or work with the agritourism or direct marketing providers to execute, develop, or improve these initiatives or projects?
12. Have you experienced high participation rates and positive reception by agritourism/direct marketing providers?
13. Can you tell me about any other partnerships or networks that are used to help
14. What are the benefits of these initiatives/projects to your organization?
   a. What are the benefits to agritourism or direct marketing providers?
   b. What might be some benefits to consumers or visitors?

If no:

15. Do you work with other organizations that are involved in agritourism or direct marketing?
a. If so, can you tell me about the nature of this relationship?

**Local Food**

16. Have you noticed if there are different responses or perceptions of using the term ‘agritourism’ versus saying ‘local food’?
   a. Do these responses or perceptions differ between agricultural producers or consumers/visitors?

**Agritourism/Local Food Broad Questions**

17. Why do you think agritourism or a local food focus appropriate for the agriculture, tourism, and related sectors in Essex County?
18. What were some of the signals that identified that agritourism or local food promotion was a key direction to move in?

**Future Trajectory**

19. What are your thoughts on the future of agritourism and local food promotion in Essex County and what needs to happen to get there?

**Concluding Question**

20. Is there anything else you would like to add about agritourism or the local food movement in Essex County?
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Consent Form – Agritourism Providers

Consent Form for Research Participants – Producers and Vintners

Title: Local Food, Rural Tourism and the Family Farm: Exploring Enterprise Development Pathways in Essex County, Ontario

Researcher: Heather Reid, Master’s Candidate, Geography Department, University of Guelph, xxxx@xxxx, xxx-xxx-xxxx

Supervisor: Dr. John Smithers, Faculty Advisor, Geography Department, University of Guelph, xxxx@xxxx

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Essex County Agritourism: Exploring Regional and Farm-Level Diversification”. This page is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. Please take time to read this carefully and understand the information given to you.

Purpose of study:

The research that I am conducting is a component of a larger project that examines the role of agritourism as a method of farm and winery diversification and as a feature of the regional economy in Essex County.

For this portion of the project, I am interested in talking to:

- farm and winery owners/managers who offer on-farm activities (e.g. farm markets, tours, or U-Picks) within Essex County and are able to provide information about the enterprise’s participation within the agritourism sector and/or local food movement.

What you will do in this study:

You are being asked to participate voluntarily in an interview, during which you will be asked questions about your thoughts on and engagement in the agritourism sector. We are asking for no more than one hour of your time. The interview will take place at a location and time that is convenient for you. We hope in most cases this would involve a visit to your organization or farm/winery. A summary of the final results of the study will be provided to you (by e-mail or mail) if you wish to receive them.

Foreseeable risks and benefits to participants:

There is no foreseeable risk of harm to interview participants. There are no direct benefits to the participants. However, your participation will help to shed more light on the challenges and successes of the agritourism sector and may have implications for future study and/or development of the sector.
Reporting of results:

The information collected during the interview will be used only for the research project described here. Contents of the interviews will be included in the form of both selected direct quotations, and in summarized form. The primary publication from this research is a graduate Masters thesis though it is hoped an academic journal article and/or a conference presentation will also be possible. The completed thesis will be available through the University of Guelph’s McLaughlin Library.

Rights of Participants:

- You can choose whether to be in this study or not – there is no obligation on you whatsoever to participate.
- You may decline to answer any questions you wish and still remain in the study.
- You may withdraw at any time during the research up to the preparation of the completed final graduate thesis. According to typical times to completion we anticipate this to be early summer 2017.
- You can expect the researcher to treat you with respect and courtesy and honour any reasonably requests you may make for the scheduling of interviews or examination of the information they have taken down.
- You are not waiving any legal rights of any kind because of your participation in this research project.

Confidentiality

- Your information will be accessible only to the student researcher and advisor for purposes pertaining directly to this project and will not be shared in raw data form with others.
- Your identity and personal details are confidential. We will not identify you in the reporting of results without your consent. Any direct quotations from interviews will not be attributed to the speaker unless permission is given.
- Data will be stored in a secure location designated for this purpose, within the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph. The data will be retained until completion of the research project, and will be erased or destroyed thereafter (approx. Dec., 2017).
- For purposes of both completeness and accuracy, it is extremely helpful to have a recorded conversation. With your permission, interviews will be audio-recorded, though participants have the right to review/edit the audio files or transcripts. Audio recordings will be deleted after transcription.

I agree to be audio recorded □ Yes □ No
I agree to the use of direct quotations □ Yes □ No
I agree to be re-contacted should it be deemed necessary by the researcher □ Yes □ No
I would like to receive a copy of the final report and findings of this research □ Yes □ No
This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants (REB # 16JN013). If you have questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant, please contact:

Director, Research Ethics
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON
Telephone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx (ext. xxxxx)
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
E-Mail: xxxx@xxxx

If you have any questions or comments about the research itself, please do not hesitate to contact either the student researcher or the faculty advisor.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT:
I have read the information provided for this study. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation at any time during collection and after collection until August, 2017. I have been given a copy of this form for my records.

__________________________    _________________________       _____________
Name (please print)          Signature        Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS:

__________________________    _________________________       _____________
Name (please print)          Signature        Date
You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Essex County Agritourism: Exploring Regional and Farm-Level Diversification”. This page is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. Please take time to read this carefully and understand the information given to you.

**Purpose of study:**

The research that I am conducting is a component of a larger project that examines the role of agritourism as a method of farm and winery diversification and as a feature of the regional economy in Essex County.

For this portion of the project, I am interested in talking to:

- representatives of county and regional level organizations that promote and support agritourism or local food initiatives within Essex County or Southwest Ontario and

**What you will do in this study:**

You are being asked to participate voluntarily in an interview, during which you will be asked questions about your thoughts on and engagement in the agritourism sector. We are asking for no more than one hour of your time. The interview will take place at a location and time that is convenient for you (e.g. work office or coffee shop). A summary of the final results of the study will be provided to you (by e-mail or mail) if you wish to receive them.

**Foreseeable risks and benefits to participants:**

There is no foreseeable risk of harm to interview participants. There are no direct benefits to the participants. However, your participation will help to shed more light on the challenges and successes of the agritourism sector and may have implications for future study and/or development of the sector.

**Reporting of results:**

The information collected during the interview will be used only for the research project described here. Contents of the interviews will be included in the form of both selectee direct quotations, and in summarized form. The primary publication from this research is a graduate
Masters thesis though it is hoped an academic journal article and/or a conference presentation will also be possible. The completed thesis will be available through the University of Guelph’s McLaughlin Library.

Rights of Participants:

- You can choose whether to be in this study or not – there is no obligation on you whatsoever to participate.
- You may decline to answer any questions you wish and still remain in the study.
- You may withdraw consent at any time during the period of active research and up to the preparation of the completed final graduate thesis. According to typical times to completion we anticipate this to be early summer 2017.
- You can expect the researcher to treat you with respect and courtesy and honour any reasonably requests you may make for the scheduling of interviews or examination of the information they have taken down.
- You are not waiving any legal rights of any kind because of your participation in this research project.

Confidentiality

- Your information will be accessible only to the student researcher and advisor for purposes pertaining directly to this project and will not be shared in raw data form with others.
- Your identity and personal details are confidential. We will not identify you in the reporting of results without your consent. Any direct quotations from interviews will not be attributed to the speaker unless permission is given. We do however recognize that contributions from organizational key informants such as yourself, speaking from the vantage point of their particular affiliations may enable some readers of our completed work to speculate and even surmise the speakers’ identity. Please advise us if you have concerns in this regard.
- Data will be stored in a secure location designated for this purpose, within the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph. The data will be retained until completion of the research project, and will be erased or destroyed thereafter (approx. Dec., 2017).
- For purposes of both completeness and accuracy, it is extremely helpful to have a recorded conversation. With your permission, interviews will be audio-recorded, though participants have the right to review/edit the audio files or transcripts. Audio recordings will be deleted after transcription.

I agree to be audio recorded □ Yes □ No
I agree to the use of direct quotations □ Yes □ No
I allow the nature of my position/job title to be identified in any publications resulting from this study □ Yes □ No
I allow the name of the organization that I represent to be identified in any publications resulting from this study  □ Yes □ No

I would like to receive a copy of the final report and findings of this research □ Yes □ No

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants (REB # 16JN013). If you have questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant, please contact:

Director, Research Ethics
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON
Telephone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx (ext. xxxxx)
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If you have any questions or comments about the research itself, please do not hesitate to contact either the student researcher or the faculty advisor.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT:
I have read the information provided for this study. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation at any time during collection and after collection until August, 2017. I have been given a copy of this form for my records.

__________________________    _________________________       _____________
Name (please print)          Signature        Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS:

__________________________    _________________________       _____________
Name (please print)          Signature        Date
### APPENDIX C: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS CODING FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Node</th>
<th>Secondary Node</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Abundance</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery related to the abundance (quantity or variety) of the product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery related to the ‘authenticity’ of a product/cuisine with respect to place of origin or 'the local’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery related to quality indicators including ‘natural,’ ‘wholesome,’ ‘fresh,’ formal recognition (e.g. wine medals), or the safeness of the product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any description or imagery of landscapes or agricultural spaces, including: the field, the farm market, the vineyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery related to interacting with or the experience of landscapes or agricultural spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agrarian</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery of agrarian (idealized or representative) spaces or design themes (e.g. wooden backdrops, mason jars, handmade signage, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery of rural communities or the countryside as a lived space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Farmer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any description or imagery of agricultural producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery of agricultural producers as experts or of having elevated knowledge about something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery of the farmer as a family unit, as belonging to a family, or as a parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
<td>Any reference or imagery of the farmer or their lifestyle as being vulnerable (e.g. economically, lifestyle, heritage)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX D: FARM/WINERY-LEVEL CODING FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Node</th>
<th>Secondary Node</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference or explanation of what activities are offered or completed on the farm or related to the enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agritourism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference of agritourism-specific activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference to other on-farm activities (e.g. soy, wheat, corn, cattle) or off-farm activities (e.g. farmers’ markets, wholesaling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways to Agritourism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference or explanation of how and why they engage in agritourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference to financial motivations (e.g. wholesaling-related)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Financial</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference to non-financial motivations (e.g. family pressure, lifestyle change)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference or explanation of their customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any description of the demographic of their customers (e.g. age, family group, origin, urban/rural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations/Draws</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference or explanation of why customers come to the farm, what they expect, and what they enjoy most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference or explanation of the challenges to running or starting an agritourism operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference or explanation of the resources used to develop or start the enterprise and/or navigate challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal/Written</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference to more ‘formal’ means of learning including post-secondary education, workshops, guides, government websites, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks/Interpersonal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference to the use of networks (with other farmers, with supportive organizations, with other tourism providers, etc.) or interpersonal learning (e.g. from family)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td></td>
<td>Any reference or explanation of tourism within the region, including involvement and branding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWIPEI</td>
<td>Any reference to interactions/experience with or perceptions of Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>Any reference to perceptions of the tourism industry within Essex County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Trajectory</td>
<td>Any reference or explanation of the enterprises’ future trajectory and expectations for the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>